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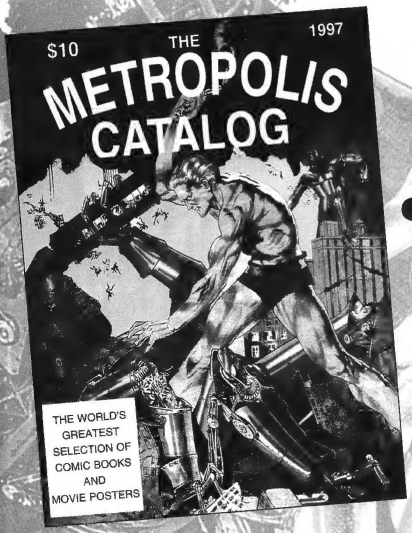

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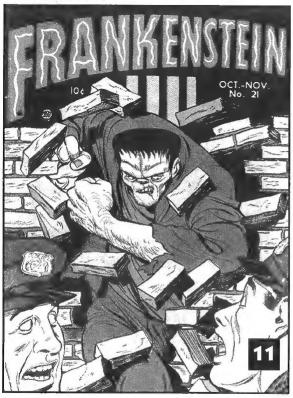

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PASSING AN ALLEY ONE EVENING, HE HEARS A CRY FOR HELP — AND ACTS!
A VAMPIRE!
R. OCCULT, THE GHOST DETECTIVE, HAS SWORN TO COMBAT SUPER-NATURAL EVIL IN THIS WORLD
45

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ON THE COVER: A CBM Halloween treat... a close-up of the cover of the highly collectible **Punch Comics #12** (Harry A. Chesler, Jan 1945). BELOW The rich textures of Al Feldstein's original art for the cover of **Weird Science-Fantasy Annual #1** (1952).

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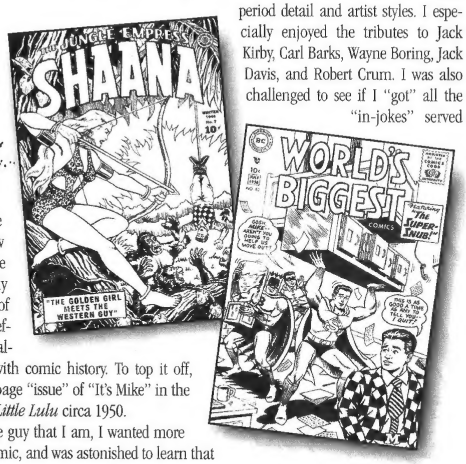
Tragic Temptations?

As a fan of older comics, it's a rare occasion these days when I get excited about something new. But it does happen occasionally... so I thought I might share my latest "discovery" with you here on the editor's page. I recently got the opportunity to see a sneak preview of a newly published satire comic... with the ubiquitous title *The Seduction of Mike.* It's essentially a parody of (and a loving tribute to) the different eras of comic history. This element alone was enough to catch the attention of a Golden Age and Silver Age collector like myself.

Tracing the 60-year career of the central character "Mike," the publication depicts him actually playing parts in every comic genre you can imagine... including horror and superhero, plus a few more that I could hardly believe were included. I don't want to spoil the surprise for you, so I'll leave those to your discovery. Suffice it to say, the very fact that this approach was used indicates that the writer (Rob Sikoryak) has really done his homework on comic history. Even though I may be a little jaded on this topic, I was still impressed.

The book includes wonderful cover parodies that are done with such knowledge of the medium and attention to detail that you'd swear they were "real" examples of every major comics archetypes... and titles like *World's Biggest, Tragic Temptations, Shaana of the Jungle,* and *Bizarre Fears* add to the fun.

Another great aspect of the book is the meticulous attention to period detail and artist styles. I especially enjoyed the tributes to Jack Kirby, Carl Barks, Wayne Boring, Jack Davis, and Robert Crum. I was also challenged to see if I "got" all the "in-jokes" served up throughout the work. I thought I knew my comic time-line pretty well, but happily discovered that some of the many wonderful references could even challenge those familiar with comic history. To top it off, they've included a 15-page "issue" of "It's Mike" in the style of John Stanley's *Little Lulu* circa 1950.



Being the inquisitive guy that I am, I wanted more background on this comic, and was astonished to learn that it took FIVE YEARS to research and create... and that the project was actually funded (in part) by the National Endowment for the Arts! I was further astounded to learn that the "unknown" Rob Sikoryak has had work published in such diverse publications as *RAW, Snake Eyes, Village Voice,* and even *The New Yorker.* (Whew!)

So if you're a fan of Golden Age and Silver Age comics I predict you're going to really enjoy this 48 page "new-old" comic book. It's available in late fall from Fantagraphics and truly deserves to be described by a phrase I rarely use... Highly Recommended!

Gary

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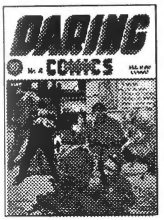

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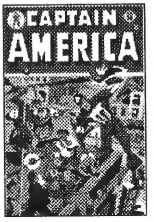

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My Favorite CBM

Comic Book Marketplace #50 has to be my favorite issue so far of your excellent magazine. Much as I have loved the theme issues on various artists and genres of comics, the life and times of editor Julius Schwartz is a subject even dearer to my core interest in the hobby. The science fiction and costumed hero titles turned out in the 1950s and early 1960s by the Schwartz stable of writers and artists are among the finest efforts ever realized in the comic book medium. They (along with the EC comics of the early to mid-1950s) are certainly the titles that have played the most vital role in my own appreciation of this great pastime.

Before CBM #50, I already knew some of the facts in the Julius Schwartz legend: science fiction fan turned science fiction literary agent turned DC Comics editor; key player in the superhero revival that launched the industry's Silver Age; a man with an obvious genius for attracting and nurturing some of the greatest talents in the history of the four-color stage.

But until CBM #50 I never had a real grasp of the cast of major "players" in both sci-fi and comics who were in one way or another affected by the energy, effort and discerning taste of one Julie Schwartz. The intricate tapestry of facts presented in the articles by Pat Calhoun and by Robert Beerbohm, backed by the Schwartz interview conducted by Shawn Hamilton, were absolutely fascinating reading for this long-time fan. And the next issue we got coverage on the Silver Age Schwartz! That is where I first encountered (and was immediately mesmerized) by this comic book wizard–in the pages of The Brave and The Bold #30, Green Lantern #1, and The Flash #114. I look forward to more nostalgic reviews of those times, and don't doubt for a minute that I'll learn some things along the way of which I was previously ignorant.

In parting, I'd like to voice my appreciation for the related pieces in #50 on those esoteric Schwartz gems Captain Comet (reviewed by Mike Tiefenbacher), Space Cabbie and Interplanetary Insurance, Inc. (by Michelle Nolan). Thanks to one and all at CBM!

John R. Thomas, Idaho

The Mysterious LD

In regards to David Otis Miller's letter in CBM #52, the DC Comics cover artist in the 1970s with the initials "LD" was, Luis Dominguez. Luis became the main cover artist for many of DC's horror books after Nick Cardy's departure in the mid-1970s. In fact, their styles were similar with Luis's art being less soft, having more lines, with the lines being thinner. Luis was very talented and his style fit the horror genre well. Finally, I remember seeing a short bio on him in the letters page of one of DC's horror books but can't remember which. I hope this helps.

John Coates, Georgia

Market Mayhem

Just finished my new copy of CBM #51—great article on Julius Scwartz and also the ever great Al Williamson. But my favorite was the AACC banquet, all those pictures of comics greats was lots of fun. I am writing though about a much more sinister topic, The Market! I've been collecting again after a 10 year vacation from the hobby. My last collection went the way of rent money, and other necessities. I have noticed that the hobby has become much more money orientated and that is upsetting.Being the "wishful" person that I am I went out looking to regain some of my old collection, starting with the era that I used to buy at the local liqour store in beautiful Lake Arrowhead, California, on those wonderful summer vacations.

Who could have known that the "Bronze Age" was now being priced on the Gold trade. Those wonderful GL/GA drug issues, Amazing Spider-Man #100 & 101, Spectre #2-4, all the Adams Batman. I thought I was "Alice" and comic collecting was the "Looking Glass." (Evil Queen and all!)

I am a man of fine taste with a wallet that falls well shy of full. But I keep on on keeping on. My concerns are this, I love collecting paper and the whole concept of preserving this wonderful medium we call comics. It is without a doubt the best form of personal expression and art America has ever come up with. But the "Market" is a monster! It makes collecting a real drag, I was on a good roll collecting Bronze House of Mystery & House of Secrets and all the other National Pub. horror titles when all of a sudden the "Market" said they were hot and my fair prices of purchase went almost through the roof! I don't think the old saying, "If you want it bad enough,"should apply to comic collecting. We are a fraternity of collectors and should not be out there for the all mighty buck. Not to say that paying a "Good Price" for a solid book is robbery, but look around at some of these sellers and ask yourself, "Is this right"?

I love the hobby—its more of a life style for me as I can recall fond memories from just glancing at a cover to a favorite issue, or the smell of a comic shop,or that great find at an old bookstore. All these facets to collecting are what it is all about. I think we all need to step back and ask ourselves why are we here and what does collecting a bit of history really mean to us.

Ronn E. Sutton, Hawaii

Weird Pedigree

Wow! Talk about excitement. I have just been to my first San Diego Con in ten years and boy has it changed! It's bigger than I ever imagined. The con has really come a long way since I first started going to it in 1979. I took time away from collecting for marriage, kids, work, etc., but I am now back and with that comic book fever again.

I want to share a startling revelation... Last year I purchased a copy of Mask Comics #1 from Geoffrey's Comics in Gardena, California. Not only was this issue's cover drawn by the legendary L.B. Cole and featured a Satan cover, but Geoffrey also told me where this particular copy originated from. Two brothers came into his store to sell him approximately 300 comics from Silver to Gold with some Keys. The brothers said that the comics were from their father's collection and they wanted to dump them for cash. The brothers were named Lyle and Eric Menendez! The same brothers who a few months later killed their parents for money and made worldwide headlines.

Okay, so now I have a comic with the devil staring out from the cover, which used to be in the hands of two actual killers. This has got to be some kind of a unique pedigree! Anyway, at the San Diego Con, I questioned Geoffrey about this again before I decided to write and he told me that he still has some of the books in the collection left over if any of you want to get a weird pedigree of sorts. It never ceases to amaze me who has got books out there. It really illustrates how all walks of life have read comics, or collected them, at some point in their lives.

The final piece of trivia in this age of chromium, die-cut, glow in the dark, etc., comic book covers being the norm... which book was first? As far as die-cut cover, the winner is Fawcett's Funny Animals #66 (1950).

Greg McWhorter, California

Dr. No

Greatly enjoyed Michelle Nolan's article, "DC's Forgotten Forty-Four," in CBM 51, since it touches on a number of topics that fascinate me as well. A few comments:

1) In the article, Michelle wrote, "A few say the Silver Age started with Superman's Girl Friend Lois Lane #1 in 1958." You can make a case for that, because that title was the first new superhero comic DC began since Superboy # 1 nearly a decade earlier. Could it be Michelle has ignored Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen # 1, which debuted four years earlier than Lois Lane #1? I would think Jimmy Olsen's Silver Age credentials would have more cachet than Lois Lane's, both because it predates Showcase #4 and Detective #225, and because the title already had its Silver Age format down pat in the mid-1950s.

2) Michelle also wrote that The Flash "was the only new comic book DC started in 1959." In her own article she stated that Pat Boone also started in 1959.

3) My experiences with the so-called "Forgotten Forty-Four" appears to be the exact opposite of Michelle's. Precisely because these issues come so late in their respective titles' runs, those issues are easier to find than the earlier issues, and much less expensive.

4) Finally, Michelle wrote that Many Loves Of Dobie Gillis replaced A Date With Judy on the DC schedule; actually, Dobie replaced Sgt. Bilko (which was only fitting, since the "Dobie Gillis" TV show debuted on CBS the same month "The Phil Silvers Show" was canceled).

On a separate topic, the Overstreet Price Guide lists Showcase #43 (March/April 1963), featuring "Dr. No," as "1st DC Silver Age movie adaptation." Perhaps this is so if we limit ourselves to just the action/adventure genre. However, there are at least two Jerry Lewis films that I know of that were adapted in The Adventures Of Jerry Lewis, and that pre-date Showcase #43: "The Ladies Man" appears in Jerry Lewis # 66 (Sep/Oct 1961), while Jerry Lewis # 74 (Jan/Feb 1963) adapts "It's Only Money." Clearly, then, "Dr. No" is NOT the first DC Silver Age movie adaptation. The question remains, though, whether Jerry Lewis #66 is the first time DC adapted a Jerry Lewis movie. Best,

Dave Blanchard, Ohio

Freelance, Canadian Hero!

For months now I've been waiting for someone, anybody, to say something on the "Banned in Canada" article by Francis Litzinger in CBM #45. Well, as a one-eyed sailor would put it, "I CAN STANDS NO MORE!" Francis Litzinger does not have all his facts straight. Especially when it comes to Golden Age Canadian heroes like Johnny Canuck and a hero that Mr. Litzinger totally ignores—Freelance. Now fine Canadian comic book historians, Pete Harris, Robert Macmillan and Don Hutchison will back me up on this one, but as it stands, good old Johnny Canuck was not as popular as people are led to believe. Johnny Canuck was neither the Superman or the Captain America of the Canadian comic book industry during the 1940s.

Let's begin with Johnny Canuck and examine "Canada's Greatest Hero," shall we? Now, one would assume that good old Johnny Canuck had his own comic book, right? Nope, he didn't. He appeared in Dime Comics and only Dime Comics. Well then he must have been the lead character of that book, with the front cover all to himself right?! Nope again. Johnny Canuck was not the lead character in Dime Comics. That honor went to Rex Baxter, a Flash Gordon type hero, who also dominated the front covers of Dime Comics for a long time. True, Johnny Canuck was also on the covers of Dime Comics, but only as a small figure in the corner, announcing his presence in the book and that's all. Simply put, Johnny Canuck doesn't come off as "Canada's Greatest Hero," does he? Perhaps he never was! People not around at that time just assumed it, turning a fictional popularity into fact.

This of course brings us back to that hero that Mr. Litzinger ignored...Freelance. Created and written by Ted McCall and drawn by Ed Furness, Freelance aided by his sidekick, Big John Collins, battled the Axis powers all over the world. Using only his athletic abilities and his brain (what an odd concept!), Freelance was able to thwack the plans of the Nazi villains many a time in his own book. You heard me, in his own book! Freelance was one of the few heroes to have his own book, correction, one of the few Canadian comic book heroes to have his own book!

Starting July of 1941 and ending in December of 1946, Freelance put 35 issues worth of adventure under his belt (Freelance didn't wear a hat) with a circulation of

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Last Gasps!

By Pat S. Calhoun

Comic books reached their peak of popularity in the early 1950s when a vast and eager audience of children and adults bought over two million comics every day! But the marketplace was turbulent and many of the publishers had problems (as pulps were being phased out) despite strong comics sales. All through this era there was great fear that the bottom could drop out at any time, and by mid-1954 it was obvious that there were dreaded changes due for the comic book industry. Amid all the fecundity many venerable old titles breathed their last breath, and many of the old publishers quit the field.

Hillman Publications' last comic book was the final issue of *Airboy*, #111, dated May 1953. Airboy's last exploit is as over-the-top as ever as he sets out to thwart the plans for world domination by a clown who has a private army that he transports to distant destinations by shooting them in huge hollow shells from a colossal cannon. Osta Zomboli stirs up unrest by mocking politicians on stage then blasts his hired bullies to trouble spots to wreak havoc. Of course Airboy manages to bring the curtain down on the evil clown, in eight pages capably rendered by Ernie Schroeder, who drew most of the latter issues of the run.

The *Airboy* issues were structured with the middle of the book devoted to a variety of short sketches: biographies of historical figures or vignettes from history and legend, even a few horror stories in some of the later years. This last ish doesn't feature a horror yarn; one wonders if they weren't just using up inventory at the end. Still, the fillers are good quality–they hit on many interesting topics through the years–and this final ish offers: a four-page spy story where frogmen figure out why a ship exploded, a three-page tale of a shoemaker's revenge upon his son's murderer, and a five-pager about sled dogs in the frozen Northwest.

"Sandwiching" the book is the other lead feature, the Heap. One of the greatest and most under-rated characters of the Golden Age, the Heap was the original four-color "spirit of dying man merges with swamp growth to form a powerful humanoid plant," who for seven years shambled through a series that presented a unique viewpoint. This unheralded swan song takes place in the "backweirds" of Ireland, where the Heap helps make sure a rich countess doesn't cheat her way to winning a horse race and thus rob a poor couple of their one hope to raise enough money to get married. Schroeder drew the Heap throughout the last few years as well; his scratchy style suited the shaggy being. This seven-pager has a nice creepy ending.

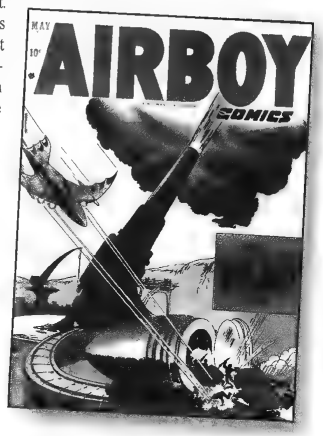
Quality's *Police Comics*, which had run through the 1940s as a solid anthology headlining Jack Cole's Plastic Man and Will Eisner's Spirit, changed to a crime and detective title in 1950, showcasing Ken Shannon, a tough private eye, and T-Man, a wisecracking Treasury agent who found trouble in all the many countries and continents that he traveled. The last issue of *Police*, #127 (Oct 1953), is the only one to feature a *T-Man* cover. The cover is redrawn from T-Man #4 with the scene changed from Panama to Thailand.

"Thunder in Thailand" is amusing enough, but it's the same old stuff. Still, every so often, T-Man's breezy first-person narration hooked itself to a really good story, and this cast a warm glow over the series. Here, Pete Trask cracks the *Commies'* trick of smuggling information out of Bangkok by doing business as tropical fish exporters and "coding" the lots of fish they ship.

Next up is Inspector Denver, a back up feature that started in #103 along with T-Man and Ken Shannon. It's a five-page police procedural that is readable if unoriginal as Denver works to uncover the real culprits in a museum theft.

The Ken Shannon story is pretty exciting: "The Death Drivers" begins when Shannon's redheaded secretary, Dee Dee Dawson, wins a new car in a contest. The car gets stolen, and turns up–painted and with different plates–on a used car lot. But the serial numbers don't match! Shannon smells a rat and discovers that the used car lot is owned by a guy who also owns a junkyard and an auto daredevil circus, the Death Drivers.

Ken and Dee Dee attend a show, which climaxes with a five-car crash. Shannon hangs around "backstage" and hears them talking about switching serial numbers from the wrecks to the hot cars! Of course Ken ends up driving a car out on the track and being chased by the crash-happy drivers. It's a thoroughly enjoyable romp, and Dee Dee's offer to pay Ken his fees in kisses makes a piquant last panel.



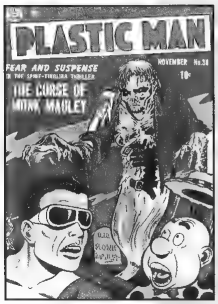
Airboy's birdplane comes in with machine guns blasting at soldiers preparing to be shot into space on the last issue of Airboy (#111, May 1953), a tremendous title.

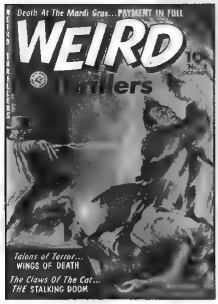
The *Police* issues wrapped up with a generic "cop drama"; in "The Haunted Cop" a rookie policeman must contend with his father's awesome record with the department.

Quality Comics hung on until 1956, when they sold their titles to DC.

Fight Comics #86 (1954) were among the last comics published by Fiction House, and the interior contents are reprints, but they're marvelous ones! Two episodes of Tiger Man drawn by George Evans in a lushly seductive *(Continued on page 13)*

Four-Color Frights of '52





By Pat S. Calhoun

Forty-five years ago horror had its heyday on the comic book racks, with close to a hundred titles offering tales of gruesome wonder, mayhem, supernatural suspense, and weird mystery. Publishers large and small served up murder and ghostly, ghastly vengeance, stories of transformation–where people changed into creatures, and yarns that showed the spine-tingling results of visitations from beyond our ken. For three fantastic years, from 1952 through 1954, the fantasy genres dominated the four-color scene. Let's take a moment to celebrate by traveling back in time with some books that were on the newsstands for Halloween in 1952.

Forbidden Worlds #11 (November) is a good example of this fine title from the American Comics Group that enjoyed a 17-year life span, making it the third-longest-running fantasy title from any company. "The Mummy's Treasure" makes an eye-catching cover, and the story inside is horror with a happy ending that packs a wonderful punch of cornball charm. Also in this ish–the spirits of Attila the Hun, Jack the Ripper, Mussolini, and Hitler are placed by black magic into their replicas in a wax museum and begin a campaign of terror in a colorful tale with intense art by Harry Lazarus.

Frankenstein #21 (October/November) contains one of Dick Briefer's finest novelettes, "World of Monsters" where Frankenstein meets up with a mad scientist who's turned his private mesa in the "Arizona wastelands" into a prehistoric jungle, populated by dinosaurs and a wildcat who has been hyper-evolved into a beautiful girl. This great title from Prize ran as a humor series through the late 1940s and came back with #18 in 1952 as a horror title–both by Briefer and both excellent.

Astonishing #19 (November) boasts a spooky Russ Heath cover–vaguely tied to the opening tale of a grim ghost in the USSR who claims Josef Stalin as his victim. Two weird classics close this Atlas book: the awesome "Top Billing" a sardonic gem about the demise of a comedy team–executed with wickedly witty writing by Stan Lee and lavishly lurid art by Joe Maneely; and "Roll Call," a tale of Death, crisply rendered in the ultra-cool modernism of Bernie Krigstein.

Weird Thrillers #5 (October/November), from Ziff-Davis starts with a superb painted cover. Inside highlights include "Wings of Death" where the hunter who brings down the snow eagle ends up feeling the vengeance of many beaks–a so-so tale that profits from nicely-textured art by Frank Giacoia, and "All the King's Men" a wowser about "voodoo-ridden Haiti" and the ghosts of the 19th-century despot Henri Christophe and the squadron of men who marched off a high wall and dropped to death to prove his army's discipline. When a Yankee crook tries to uncover Christophe's buried treasure he gets caught in a spectral re-enactment of the scene, and it costs him his life. Bob Powell's art fleshes out the nifty narrative to make this one of the many mini-masterpieces of 1950's fantasy.

Beware Terror Tales #4 (November) offers the kind of solid entertainment that Fawcett aimed to deliver. An incredible amorphous monster cover by Bernard Baily begins the book auspiciously, and the three stories inside are all worthwhile. "Revolt of the Fingers," a tale of a young pianist whose hands take on their own personalities–one of them murderous–is a gripping story (literally!) with bravura art by Bob McCarty. "The Black Candle of Life" is a supernatural ten-pager whose familiar plot benefits from a fast pace and the agile graphics of Shelly Moldoff. "The Crawling Horror" is everything the cover promised–as two scientist "room-mates," one the inventor of a compact computer and the other the creator of an evolving and growing blob of protoplasm, run into trouble when their projects merge into a monster.

Plastic Man #38 (November) shows how in those fantastic years even superhero comic covers were wont to sport rotting corpses rising from their graves. This ish does in fact feature two superhero-horror yarns: the cover tale, where Plas scares the bad guys by appearing as Satan, and "Wrath of the Wig" about a mad actor who uses voodoo to make the elaborate wigs worn in a French "period" play squeeze their wearers' heads hard enough *(Continued on page 14)*

style, packaged with a Tiger Man cover, makes a worthwhile book.

Tiger Man fights crime in street clothes and has a young assistant from India, Pali. Tiger Man receives super strength from a tiger spirit in times of crisis. The series originally ran in *Rangers Comics*, with the stories here hailing from issues #40 and #41 published in 1948.

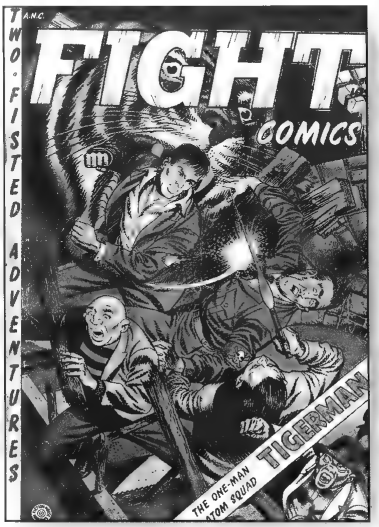
There's plenty of crises in the first tale, a gothic nightmare that starts with Tiger Man piloting his plane over Colorado with Pali and their captive, Black Hugo, thief and murderer. Hugo breaks loose and jams the plane controls and they crash-land near an old mansion that has been taken over by a mad scientist who needs a supply of fresh blood to keep his zombie slaves alive. The process of being captured by the zombies, escaping, rescuing Pali just before his blood gets drained, and going after the mad doctor and Hugo makes a terrific yarn, and it's gorgeously drawn, through nine richly-designed pages of graphic narrative, with many beautifully-textured panels.

The second story is an adventure yarn of a Briton in the French Foreign Legion who helps rescue an Algerian woman from slavery. It's reprinted from a Fiction House series that framed the stories by having them narrated as "true life events" on a live radio show.

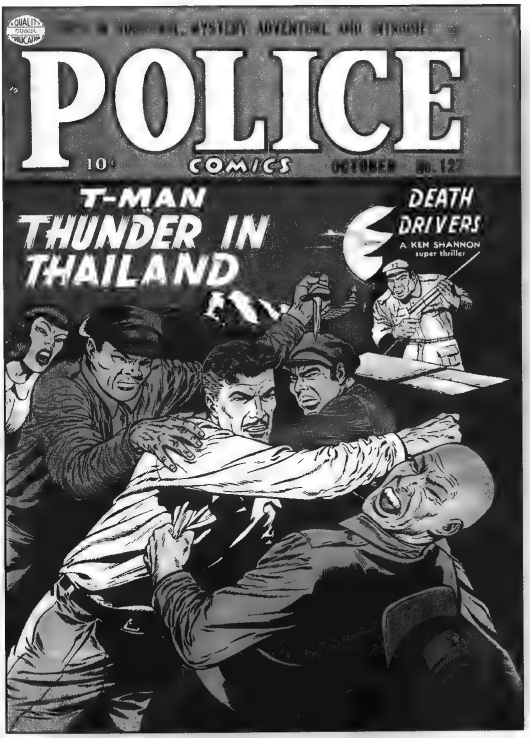
Next up is an episode reprinted from the Sky Rangers series, about a couple of flyers who patrol the business enterprises of a mogul called the Tall Texan. In this installment they uncover dope smuggling on a Hawaiian pineapple plantation. It's handsomely drawn.

The second Tiger Man reprint closes the book, and is another winner. Tiger Man exposes a bogus astrologer who manipulates movie stars in Hollywood. There's a creepy scene in the phony mystic's "Temple of the Moon" where Sultana has his pet birds attack one of his minions who bungles a job. The old plot formulas work best when embellished with fresh details like that. Again, Evans' art is a virtuoso performance.

By mid–1954 Hillman and Fiction House were gone, as well as Fawcett and Fox; 1955 would claim Eastern Color (whose *Famous Funnies* was the first continuing comic series) and United Features; and 1956 would toll the bell for Quality, Ace, and Lev Gleason. Never again would so many "big" publishers compete in the four-color arena. ■



Despite the misleading "one-man Atom squad" blurb on the cover of Fight Comics #86 (1954), this issue is a good showcase for a cool character–with two superb Tiger Man reprints from 1948.



Things get tough in Southeast Asia on the only T-man cover (#127, Oct 1953) in his 25 Police Comics appearances. The art is redrawn from T-Man #4's "Panama Peril" cover by Reed Crandall.

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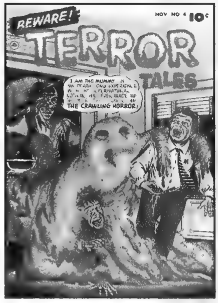
to kill them during the perfomances. This month also marked the debut of Quality's first "real" horror title, *Web of Evil*.

That's just a half a dozen from my collection, and that's not counting the December and Winter books that were coming out as well. One could truly have engineered quite a fright feast with a handful of dimes back when these books were on sale. The "glimpsed in Gerber" award goes to *Horrific* #2 (November), whose cover depicts a couple of completely creepy puppet masters moving their hapless humans on strings. Comic Media was just getting started; #3 would feature the first and most famous of Don Heck's great series of "portrait" covers–the corpse with the bullet hole in its forehead. Comic Media was one of the publishers to spring up during the boom years and fall out when the boom went bust in 1955. ■



(Pages 12 and 14, in order)
Astonishing #19 was one of the dozen fantasy titles Atlas kept on the stands; they were the workhorse of the genre and carried many titles long past the boom and "pre-Code" years.

Eleven years after Jack Cole created him, Plastic Man still offered chuckles and thrills–and even a few chills–with a long run of horror covers and stories like this one on Plastic Man #38.

Ziff-Davis published the pulp magazine Amazing Stories, and their comic covers were often painted affairs of a pulpish nature, like this strange but effective sizzling scene on Weird Thrillers #5.

The memorably menacing mummy cover on Forbidden Worlds #11 is by the prolific Ken Bald, who drew a slew of covers for ACG. The accompanying story inside has a terrific twist ending.

Frankenstein #21's cover scene (the monster breaking out of a cell) doesn't appear inside but is certainly emblematic of the relationship between Frankenstein and humans.

Beware Terror Tales #4 featured "The Mummy" a typical "horror host" of the era, who speaks the cover blurb and introduces the stories.

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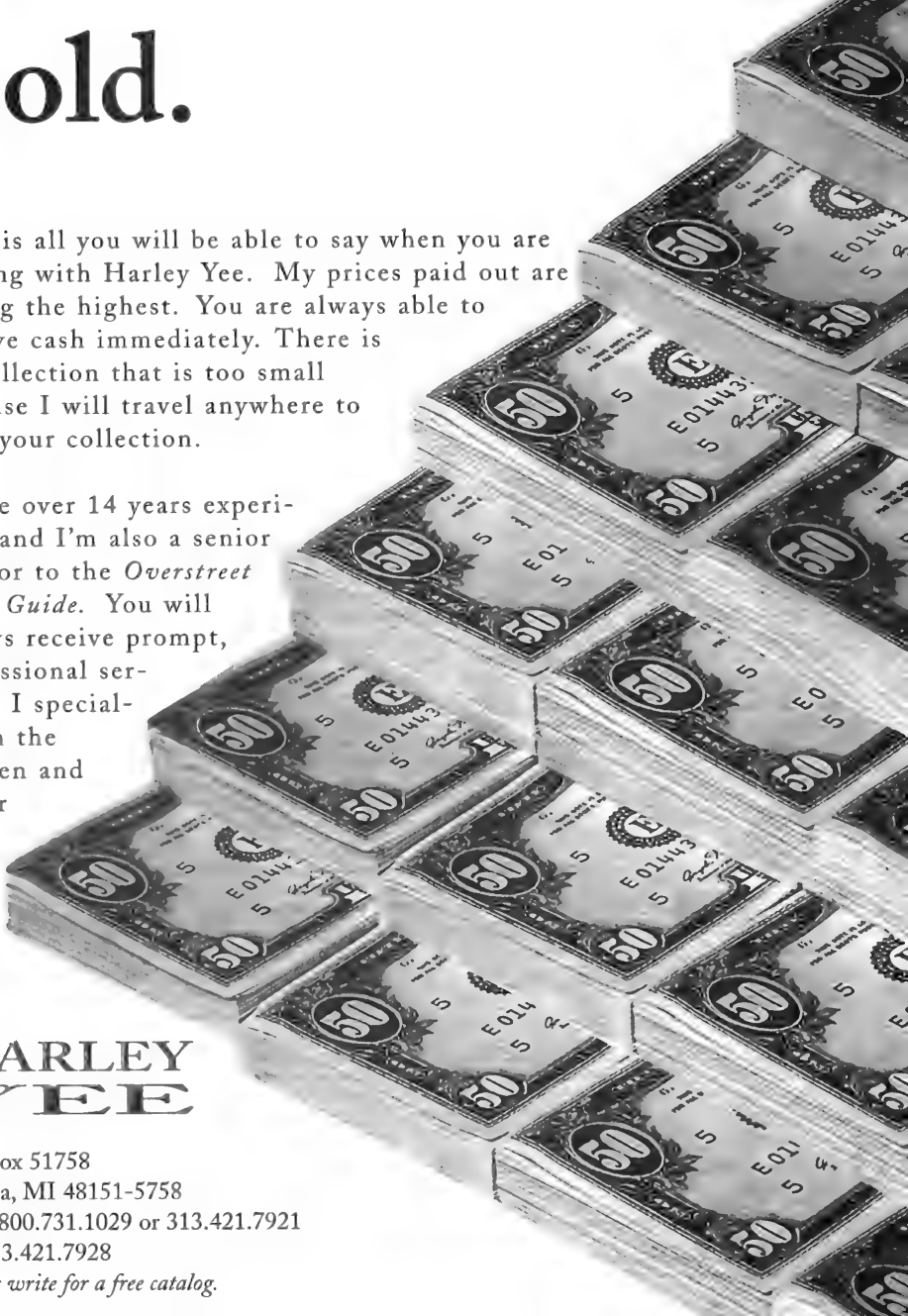

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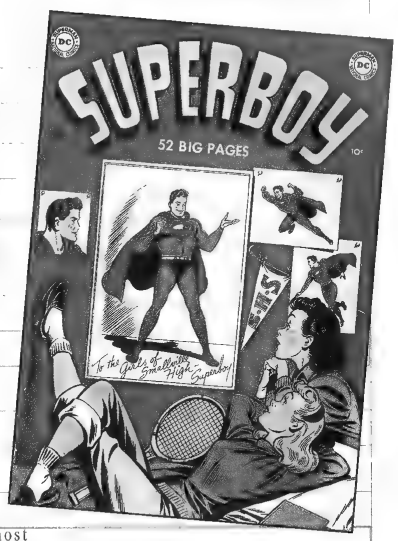
The Boy of Steel...

Qualities considered "square" by so much of America doomed Superboy to the dustbin of comic book history!

By Michelle Nolan



BOBBYSOXERS make for an unusual cover on **Superboy #6** (Jan/Feb 1950), a topic more typical of an earlier DC Comics.

Of the handful of superheroes introduced in the 1945-55 period, Superboy was unquestionably the most successful. Today, however, the original Boy of Steel is largely forgotten, the result of becoming one of the classic period pieces in comic book history.

Considering the magnitude of the Boy of Steel's popularity in the first decade of his existence, the early Superboy has to be considered the ultimate forgotten comic book hero. Fewer early Superboy stories have been reprinted than any other first-rank DC hero, and that is a shame indeed, for they were bursting with human interest.

These tales charmingly reveal the manners and morals of a time sadly gone by in America. Superboy himself was a super-powered combination of Tom Swift and Frank Merriwell with a lot of Horatio Alger's boy heroes mixed in—brave, considerate, faithful and respectful. But those very qualities, soon to be considered "square" by so much of the country, doomed the Boy of Tomorrow to the dustbin of comic book history.

Few 1945-60 comic book stories seem more dated today than the bucolic little Superboy morality plays of Smallville and environs in the original runs of *Adventure Comics* (beginning with #103, April 1946) and *Superboy Comics*. As for his first seven adventures, which were carried in *More Fun* #101-107 (January/February 1945 through January/February 1946) and did not exceed seven pages, those seem to be gone forever to casual readers except on microfiche.

For about the first five years of his existence, Superboy seemed to exist in a strange vacuum even for comic books, with no parents, no permanent friends and no history. In fact, he almost seemed to be a creation apart from Superman, even though it was always clearly understood that this was the Man of Steel as a boy. The early Superboy, who appeared to be of junior high school age and sensibilities, seemed like a super powered waif who magically appeared when his help was needed.

But during the family-oriented Baby Boomer decade of the 1950s, even while DC editor Mort Weisinger was creating a mythology that became ever more complex, Superboy emerged as the ultimate Dudley Do-Right of Smallville High. Compared to the comic book world of today, Superboy's world might as well have been on another planet or in another dimension, so different were the manners and morals of the period from the raunchy high school scene that began in earnest in the late 1960s.

Superboy's world was filled with people of kindness and conviction, along with any number of characters waiting to be converted to Superboy's philosophy of helping others first. Superboy's tales may indeed be the most dated sort of period pieces, but they nevertheless retain a charm few other comics of the late Golden Age and early Silver Age possess.

I have a few collector friends who'll pick up a Superboy comic of the 1950s just to pleasantly remember what a kinder, gentler world we used to live in, even if only in fantasy. So many of the stories seemed dedicated to a positive world view, albeit one unabashedly American. They can make you feel better just reading them.

Interestingly, there is no reference to a costumed Superboy in either of the late 1940's landmark origins of Superman... neither in Issue #53 (July/August 1948), in which his life story is retold for the first time in many years, nor in #61 (November/December 1949), in which Superman first learns he is from Krypton and also discovers the deadly truth about Kryptonite. I find this incredible—Superboy had run five issues in his own title and had been appearing for five full years in monthly adventures by the time *Superman* #61 hit the stands!

Nor is there any reference to Superboy in the first episode of the syndicated Superman television series, filmed in 1951 and entitled "Superman on Earth." (The series was first released nationally in February 1953, although some insist there were viewings before that date.)

In that first televised episode, the kindly Kents were referred to as Eben and Sarah, which were the names George Lowther used in his 1942 Superman novel for Random House. That's not surprising, since it apparently wasn't until 1950 that Superboy's father's name was established as Jonathan (in *Adventure Comics* #149, February 1950).

I've not had the ooportunity to read all the early Superboy stories in *More Fun* and *Adventure*, but the first fleeting appearance of the Kents in a Superboy story may have been in *Superboy* #3 (July-August 1949), when they appeared on the cover and made a cameo appearance in the story "Superboy's Great Amateur Hour" (a take off on the immensely popular early television talent show "The Original Amateur Hour," which evolved from radio but was only about a year old when this story was written).

In fact, the Kents made only four appearances, all brief, in the first ten issues of *Superboy*. They also appeared in single stories in #6 (January/February 1950), #8 (May/June 1950) and #10 (September/October 1950). Their appearance in #10 was vital, since that was the story in which Lana Lang was introduced in "The Girl in Superboy's Life."

By *Superboy* #12 (January/February 1951), Ma Kent was called "Marthe" but I can't find any reference to "Martha" until *Adventure* #169 (October 1951), in "Clark Kent's Private Butler." (Perhaps another reader can confirm or clarify this data about the Kents, but at any rate they were usually only minor figures until 1951.)

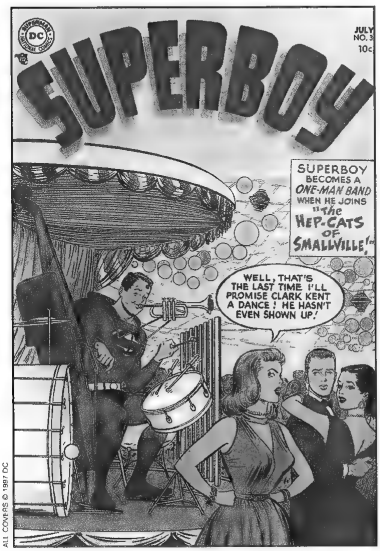
Thereafter, Superboy's parents took increasingly large roles and were included in almost every story. In most tales, in fact, they were integral to the plot, which greatly added to the appeal of the series for me. I was fortunate enough to come from a very loving family, so I can recall as a 10- or 12-year-old being puzzled that Superboy seemed to have no family in his earliest stories.

The addition of Lana Lang in *Superboy* #10 changed the series dramatically (pun fully intended and not apologized for), and it wasn't long before she was central to almost all of the Superboy stories. Many of them, however, still retained their moralistic outlook and the concept that Superboy was there to "teach a lesson," either to a misguided youth or a wayward adult.

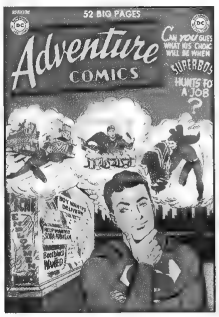
It's beyond the scope of this column to detail all of Superboy's human interest stories, but I've tried to provide a feel for the flavor of the period with a chart of those tales, as compared with Superboy's other adventures. Obviously, such a list is subjective, so I may have left out one or two tales that you also would consider of "human interest."

Beginning in the late 1950s, with the introduction of their letter columns, DC's editors tried to establish that Superboy's tales were set in the past, apparently about a dozen years or so before the continuity of Superman. Until then, however, most of Superboy's stories seemed set pretty much in the same time period that the reader was living through, even though it was obvious that the two characters were the same person.

So, for the first dozen years or so of Superboy's


SUPERBOY
JULY NO. 3 10¢
SUPERBOY BECOMES A ONE-MAN BAND WHEN HE JOINS THE HEP-CATS OF SMALLVILLE!
WELL, THAT'S THE LAST TIME I'LL PROMISE CLARK KENT A DANCE! HE HASN'T EVEN SHOWN UP!

THE BOY OF STEEL becomes a one-man band on the cover of Superboy #34 (Jul 1954), one year before Bill Haley and the Comets usher in rock 'n' roll!



CLARK KENT MEETS PERRY WHITE in Adventure Comics #152 (May 1950) and is inspired to become a reporter "for a great Metropolitan newspaper."

ALL COVERS © 1997 DC

comic book stories, there were all sorts of anachronisms. However, the small town feel of the stories tended to make the reader ignore these little problems (and we are, after all, talking about a boy who can fly!), much as the world of Little Archie and the world of Archie were pretty much one and the same, with the exception of parents who were obviously drawn younger and the like.

Even so, as a young reader these anachronisms always confused me. (I guess that's what you get for trying to impose logic on a 1940's or 1950's comic book!) For example, in one of Superboy's earliest tales—"Super Safety First!" in *Adventure Comics* #112 (January 1947)—the Boy of Steel deals with the issue of dangerous teenage drivers. This was the 17th appearance of Superboy. Logic would dictate a story set in about 1934, but several of the autos portrayed were flashy, up-to-date postwar models.

Likewise, in *Superboy* #34 (July 1954), the Boy of Steel literally becomes a one-man band in "The Hepcats of Smallville," a charming 10 page tale of youthful musicians. The leader of the Smallville youth band, "Allegro" Jones, tells Clark Kent in the opening panel that "we're really cool." So, it turned out, was Superboy, even if he became hip ahead of his time.

Incidentally, the cover shows a steamed Lana Lang—wearing a sleeveless, low-cut gown definitely in style in 1954 but not a dozen or more years earlier—saying "Well, that's the last time I'll promise Clark Kent a dance! He hasn't even shown up!" Yet such teenage tensions are not a part of this story at all. This was not atypical; DC's covers of the period frequently did not match up with the stories.

Similar circumstances obtain on the unique "pin-up" cover of Superboy #6 (January/February 1950), on which two bobbysoxers (this was before Lana was introduced) gaze worshipfully at photos of Superboy, one of which is inscribed "To the girls of Smallville High—Superboy." Not only are the bobbysoxers an anachronism, but the idea of Superboy inscribing a poster to them is entirely out of character, even for that period.

In one of several DC tales in which the company's superheroes battled juvenile delinquency, Superboy cleans up Smallville's teenage gangs in "Clark Kent—Toughie!" in *Adventure Comics* #197 (February 1954). This tale was already badly dated only a couple of years after it appeared, especially after the wave of teenage angst films such as "Rebel Without a Cause" (1956) began to appear in the mid-1950s.

There is no way DC could have reprinted this type of story, so quickly did teenage manners and morals evolve in the 1950s and '60s, much less later. And it now seems so naive that it's almost painful to consider. The same could be said for "Barbed-Wire Boys Town" in *Adventure* #124 (January 1948).

However, DC could easily have reprinted—and still could reprint—such delightful tales as "Superboy Hunts for a Job" in *Adventure* #152 (May 1950). This is one of the first of editor Mort Weisinger's attempts to create continuity, as young Clark Kent meets Daily Planet editor Perry White and is

CBM CHECKLIST

Superboy's Human Interest Stories (1948-58)

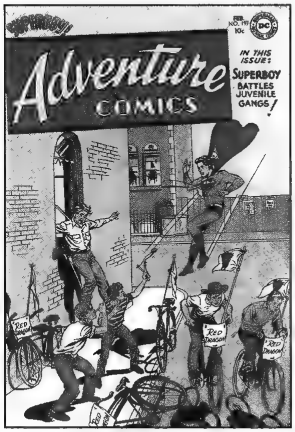
Superboy Comics

#1 (Mar/Apr 1949) - "The Big Vandals" (juvenile delinquency)
#4 (Sep/Oct 1949) - "Super Safety Boy" (safety issues)
#6 (Jan/Feb 1950) - "Superboy, Storekeeper" (family life)
#8 (May/Jun 1950) - "When Superboy Was a Superbaby" (1st Superbaby story)
#9 (Jul/Aug 1950) - "The Boy Who Stole a Brain!" (cheating)
#10 (Sept/Oct 1950) - "The Girl in Superboy's Life" (Lana Lang's debut, but amazingly not cover featured!)
#12 (Jan/Feb 1951) - "Superboy's Problem Parents" (family life)
#13 (Mar/Apr 1951) - "The Confession of Clark Kent" (Lana Lang) and "The Super Boy Scout of Smallville" (scouting)
#14 (May/Jun 1951) - "Superboy Goes to School" (truancy)
#15 (Jul/Aug 1951) - "Superboy's Class Reunion" (career inspirations) and "Clark Kent's Terrible Report Card" (problem students)
#17 (Nov/Dec 1951) - "Clark Kent...Problem Pupil" (school life)
#19 (Apr/May 1952) - "The School Without a Teacher" (school life)
#20 (Jun/Jul 1952) - "Superboy's Safety Code" (cycling safety)
#24 (Feb/Mar 1953) - "Let Superboy Do It!" (benefits of self-reliance) and "Hot Rodders of the Air" (juvenile safety)
#26 (Jun/Jul 1953) - "Lana Lang's New Boy Friend" (teen life) and "The Super Tot of Smallville" (Superbaby)
#29 (Dec 1953) - "The Super Athlete of Smallville" (sports)
#30 (Jan 1954) - "Tommy Tuttle, Superboy's Pal" (coping with loneliness)
#34 (Jul 1954) - "The Hepcats of Smallville" (teen life)
#39 (Mar 1955) - "The Boy Tycoon of Smallville" (business ethics)
#40 (Apr 1955) "The School for Geniuses" (school life)
#43 (Sep 1955) - "The Super Farmer of Smallville" (older people can be friends)
#44 (Oct 1955) - "The Jobs Superboy Lost" (the value of work)
#47 (Mar 1956) - "Clark Kent's Best Pal" (the value of friendship) and "Superboy meets Superman" (family life)
#49 (Jun 1956) - "The Loneliest Boy in Town" (pride in your father's job, used as the basis for the unsold Superman television pilot show starring John Rockwell in 1961)
#50 (Jul 1956) - "The Boy Who Stole Superboy's Identity" (personal ethics)
#53 (Dec 1956) - "Superboy's Switch in Time" (family life)
#55 (Mar 1957) - "The Secret of Smallville High" (family pride)
#56 (Apr 1957) - "Clark Kent, Vandal" (juvenile delinquency)
#57 (Jun 1957) - "The One-Man Baseball Team" (sports)
#62 (Jan 1958) - "The Super Clown of Smallville" (harm of practical jokes)
#63 (Mar 1958) - "Clark Kent, Cub Reporter" (occupational goals) - This story was entitled "Superboy in Metropolis" on the cover
#64 (Apr 1958) - "Superboy's Unknown Rival" (the value of friendship)
#66 (Jul 1958) - "Clark Kent, Class Cheat" (personal ethics)
#69 (Dec 1958) - "How Superboy Learned to Fly" (family life)

Continued on page 20

inspired to become a reporter! This charming epic seems virtually as fresh today as the day it hit the stands.

Interestingly, though, an even earlier attempt at continuity contradicts the above story. Two years earlier, the lead feature in *Adventure* #128 (May 1948) tells the tale of "How Clark Kent Met Lois Lane." In this story, Clark and Lois are both reporters on their school newspapers, intent upon becoming adult journalists, when they are introduced to "Editor Morton" of the Daily Planet as the two winners of the Planet's contest to discover the best high school reporters. This is another story that could easily be reprinted, to be enjoyed on its own merits.



Eleven years later, DC reworked this story for "Lois Lane Meets Superboy" in *Adventure* #261 (June 1959). Because DC was the only company at the time with a continuous two decade history in its leading costumed characters, the firm's editors frequently recycled story ideas. I'm sure none of those editors ever suspected that comic book "scholars" of the future would be writing about it!

ADVENTURE COMICS #197 (Feb 1954) features yet another Superboy vs. juvenile delinquency story... this one the most "dated" of all!

"When Superboy was a Superbaby" in *Superboy* #8 (May/June 1950) was the first Superbaby story. I always loved these tales of the super tot, and this one is among the most amusing. It's not only an origin recap, but also a cute but not corny story of how Superbaby inadvertently foiled a gang of diamond thieves. Incidentally, this issue features Superboy and his mother on the cover—even before DC Comics had given her a first name!

Superboy #8 also features one of several tales of the Boy of Steel vs. Humpty Dumpty, otherwise known as a the Hobby Robber. These stories are beyond awful and contrast vividly with the much better human interest tales of the same period. I never could stand stories involving such campy villains. Likewise, I couldn't abide the Superman stories of the same era about the Toyman and the Prankster. In my book, these are all so much silly dreck!

On the other hand, among the non-human interest stories in Superboy were frequent meetings with other costumed characters. These deserve and soon will receive a column dedicated to them.

Among the most fascinating of the early Superboy human

ADVENTURE COMICS

#124 (Jan 1948) - "Barbed-Wire Boys Town" (juvenile delinquency)
#126 (Mar 1948) - "Superboy, Crime-Fighting Poet" (school life)
#128 (May 1948) - "How Clark Kent Met Lois Lane" (history)
#129 (Jun 1948) - "The Pupils of the Past" (school life & the value of teaching)
#131 (Aug 1948) - "The Million-Dollar Athlete" (sports; talk about dated titles!)
#133 (Oct 1948) - "Superboy's Report Card" (the problems of truancy)
#136 (Jan 1949) - "My Pal Superboy" (the value of friendship)
#147 (Dec 1949) - "Clark Kent–Orphan" (family life)
#149 (Feb 1950) - "Fake Superboy" (family life)
#150 (Mar 1950) - "Superboy's Initiation" (high school fraternities)
#151 (Apr 1950) - "The Boy Who Talked Too Much" (the evils of gossip)
#152 (May 1950) - "Superboy Hunts for a Job" (the inspiration of work)
#157 (Oct 1950) - "The Worst Boy in Smallville" (juvenile delinquency)
#158 (Nov 1950) - "The Impossible Task" (school life)
#159 (Dec 1950) - "Superboy, Millionaire" (the evils of snobbery)
#160 (Jan 1951) - "Superboy, Prince Charming" (ugly ducklings can turn beautiful)
#161 (Feb 1951) - "The Girl Who Was Scoop-Crazy" (Lana Lang)
#162 (Mar 1951) - "The Super Coach of Smallville High" (sports)
#163 (Apr 1951) - "Superboy's Phony Father" (family life)
#166 (Jul 1951) - "The Town That Stole Superboy" (Smallville vs. Hadley)
#169 (Oct 1951) - "Clark Kent's Private Butler" (family life)
#170 (Nov 1951) - "Lana Lang's Big Crush" (sports)
#173 (Feb 1952) - "Superboy's School of Hard Knocks" (lessons of responsibility)
#176 (May 1952) - "Superboy's New Parents" (family life)
#197 (Feb 1954) - "Clark Kent–Toughie" (juvenile delinquency)
#203 (Aug 1954) - "Uncle Superboy" (working with children)
#207 (Dec 1954) - "Smallville's Worst Athlete" (sports)
#213 (Jun 1955) - "The Junior Jury of Smallville" (personal responsibility)
#221 (Feb 1956) - "The Babe of Steel" (Superbaby)
#229 (Oct 1956) - "The End of the Kent Family" (family life)
#231 (Dec 1956) - "The Super Feats of Superbaby" (family life)
#261 (Jun 1959) - "Lois Lane Meets Superboy" (teen life)

interest stories is "Super Safety Boy!" in *Superboy* #4 (September/October 1949). At the bottom of the first page is the plug, "In cooperation with the National Safety Council and the Advertising Council." This story is literally one of DC's traditional single-page public interest plugs fleshed out into a full-length tale. It's one of the earliest examples of DC's attempts to combine citizenship with comic books.

Superboy stories often ended with a moral, such as "The Boy Who Stole a Brain!" in *Superboy* #9 (July/August 1950). This story effectively conveys the evils of cheating in school. Perhaps you may disagree, but I strongly feel that stories such as this helped create an inspiring influence on America's youth. ■

Michelle Nolan is a nationally recognized collector and researcher of comic books from the '40s through the '60s. In real life, Michelle works as a freelance journalist.

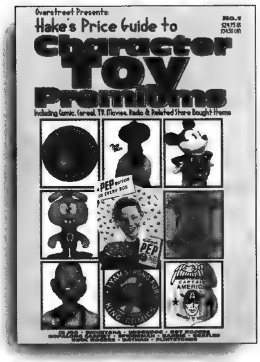
Superboy Prices

GD, VG & FN PRICE PER OVERSTREET #27

Pre-Code issues	Post-Code 10¢-ers
#1 (Mar/Apr 1949) $620, $1,240, $1,860	#39-48 $22, $44, $66
#2 $168, $337, $506	#49 $26, $52, $77
#3 $131, $262, $393	#50 $22, $44, $66
#4-5 $90, $181, $271	#51-60 $17, $34, $51
#6-9 $78, $156, $234	#61-67 $14, $29, $43
#10 (1st Lana Lang) $78, $156, $234	#68 (1st Bizarro, Oct/Nov 1958) $55, $110, $165
#11-15 $59, $119, $178	#69-77 $11, $22, $33
#16-20 $40, $80, $120	#78 $20, $40, $60
#21-26 $34, $69, $103	#79 $11, $22, $33
#27 (low distribution?) $36, $72, $107	#80 $17, $33, $49
#28-30 $34, $69, $103	#81 $9, $19, $28
#31-38 $25, $100, $175	#82 $10, $20, $30
	#83-85 $9, $19, $28
	#86 $16, $32, $47
	#87-88 $9, $19, $28
	#89 (1st Mon-el) $32, $64, $96
	#90-92 $9, $19, $28

Hake's Price Guide to Character Toy Premiums

by Ted Hake



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The Story of AL FELDSTEIN

EC VISIONARY

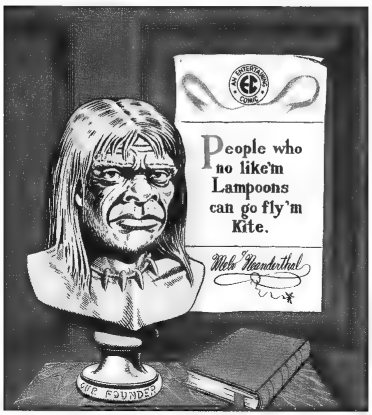
BY ANDREW THOMAS LEE

A favorite of EC fans throughout the years, the incredible art of Al Feldstein was always filled with bug-eyed aliens, flying saucers, futuristic landscapes, and the walking dead.

From the pulse-stopping world of horror to the thought-provoking allegories of science fiction, Al Feldstein's career at EC comics brought thrills to generations of readers. Feldstein began his career like many artists of the time, free lancing for various comic book companies in the heyday of the Golden Age just after World War II. Working for Fox Features, Feldstein found his way to the original EC while it was still Educational Comics just after the death of EC publisher Max Gaines. It was there that Feldstein met Max' son Bill Gaines, who was also recently out of the service. Gaines (who was studying at Brooklyn Polytechnical Institute to be a chemistry teacher) and Feldstein quickly became friends. Says Feldstein, "We met and we kind of hit it off. So, we drew up a contract for a teenage comic called *Going Steady With Peggy*. It was the first time that I had ever gotten a piece of anything. I got little piece of it. He was quite generous. I started out to do it, knowing that the teenage market was in trouble. Then they learned about the sales of teenage comics. They called me in and Bill said, "Look, I've got a contract here. I'm going to have to publish the first

three issues, but I want you to know that it's going to be a tough situation. The market seems to have collapsed." So, I said, "Okay, let's tear up the contract. I'll work for you on other things and we'll be friends." That's what we did and I guess that kind of sealed our friendship.

....AND THAT IS MY STORY, CHILDREN! THAT PLANET WAS KNOWN AS EARTH! IT IS NOT IN YOUR TEXT-BOOK MAPS OF OUR SOLAR SYSTEM BECAUSE IT EXISTS NO LONGER! BUT I AND OTHER ELDERS HERE ON MARS, WE REMEMBER IT WELL...GLOWING BRIGHTLY IN OUR SOUTHERN SKIES! WELL... THAT'S ALL FOR TODAY! CLASS...DISMISSED!



FELDSTEIN SCI-FI AND SATIRE CLASSICS: the memorable twist ending to "Destruction of the Earth!" from Weird Science #14 (Sep/Oct 1950) and his "Melo Neanderthal" from the cover of Panic #3 (Jul 1954).

Feldstein started working on some of the established Educational Comics titles, like *Gunfighter, Moon Girl, Crime Patrol, War Against Crime* and *Saddle Justice*. Feldstein had done scripts at Fox and started to write as well as illustrate the EC titles. When the Romance trend came in, EC switched the titles over to *Moon Girl Romance*, and *Saddle Romance*. The comic book publishing industry followed trends in those days, not unlike today's follow-the-leader industry. Feldstein describes, "In those days, publishers followed trends. Someone with some intelligence and creativity would start something, like Archie, and then everyone would jump on the band wagon.

There used to be, back in those days, 600 titles on the stands. Everybody, who had any money and connections with the presses, was a publisher. There weren't any really true publishers. There were opportunists."

As Gaines and Feldstein started to become friends, Gaines would occasionally give Feldstein a ride home to Brooklyn. It was on one of these occasions that the seed of EC was born. Says Feldstein, "We used to chat on some of these trips about the problems of being a comic book publisher. I suggested that instead of being the followers and getting caught when a trend ends like Westerns, or Romance, that we should innovate and be the ones that start the trends."

Gaines and Feldstein discussed their common affection for the old radio horror shows like *Lights Out, The Witch's Tale* and *Inner Sanctum*, and decided to give it a try in comics. Says Feldstein, "There had been some titles skirting horror, but we thought let's do really Gothic horror. Bill said, "Well, we could try." He didn't want to really innovate. He was cautious as a publisher for a long time. So, I came up with two titles, *The Crypt of Terror*, hosted by the Crypt Keeper, and the *Vault of Horror*, hosted by the Vault Keeper. *Crime Patrol* announced on its cover that it had a new direction with horror stories. The Crypt of Terror was introduced in *Crime Patrol* and the Vault of Horror was introduced in *War Against Crime*."

Sales figures jumped immediately on both books, and EC's horror titles were born. Feldstein adds, "So, we put out *Crypt of Terror* and *Vault of Horror*. Then I created the Witch's Cauldron. These were all creations of mine. This was before Bill really got interested in the writing. I had been touting the fact that the writing was the important thing."

Gaines' interest in writing would begin soon, as Feldstein explains, "Bill got involved with a lot of reading. He was always overweight and he was always taking some sort of diet pills. He was foolishly taking a decodrine pill around dinner time, when he shouldn't. So, he would be up late at night, not being able to sleep. He thought he was an insomniac, but actually, I think he was just reacting to the decodrine. He'd read and he'd come in in the morning and he'd have these spring board ideas. Pretty soon, we started to plot stories together. It wasn't long before he decided to let almost all of his script writers go. I was starting to write not only my own stuff, but the rest of the guys' stuff. I was doing less and less artwork. I had always felt that the story was the thing. If we could have good stories and good artists, that would be a good wedding and we could put out something that was a pretty good, entertaining product."

Feldstein would often come up with story ideas from his leisure time, Feldstein relates, "There were times when I would come in having thought up a plot over the weekend. I was out fishing one day. I was an avid surfcast fisherman on Long Island. I got this idea that wouldn't it be interesting if there were fish out there that were "man-ing." They were fishing for men. I wrote this story about this guy who ends up being dragged into the water. He picks up a candy bar and there's a hook!"

Feldstein looked forward to the writing for the added pay in his weekly paycheck. Says Feldstein, *(Continued on page 50)*

EC'S ACE OF ARTS!

AN INTERVIEW WITH MASTER ARTIST & HISTORIAN... GEORGE EVANS!

ANDY LEE: How did you get started at EC?

GEORGE EVANS: Like in many other things, my good friend Al Williamson took me down to meet the people at EC. I was working for Fawcett and had a number of regular features I was doing for them. I had a slew of features at Fawcett... Captain Video, Bob Colt, a mystery book, and a science fiction book. He said, "You've got to go down, these guys at EC are really into it. They've got good ideas, good stuff." He also told me that if Fawcett lost the lawsuit against them by DC, they'd go under. I went with him. I liked it, and evidently they liked me. I met Bill Gaines and Al Feldstein.

ANDY: So EC must have been quite a departure from Fawcett?

EVANS: Actually only in that the writing was generally better. Al (Feldstein) knew what he was doing. Obviously, he was reaching the readers. The business was doing pretty good. In fact, I did some horror stories for Fawcett, which people keep sending me the Xeroxes of. I look at them and at this distance, this removed in time, I guess they weren't too bad.

ANDY: When you went to EC, what were some of the first things you worked on?

EVANS: Almost instantly it was horror. I had been doing science fiction and just about anything for Fawcett. Al had told them I liked science fiction. They said, "We don't have any science fiction scripts, but we have a mystery, a horror script."

So, I took that. When I brought it in, they chortled over it. You know, it was told from a different point of view.

Jack Davis had his style. My style was my way. They got a huge kick out of that. I was type cast from then on.

ANDY: Well, how were you type cast?

EVANS: It was almost entirely horror stories. In fact, the thing they put together with Marie Severin's cartoon was that I was a little guy, square as can be, in a suit and hat, and I bring in this story. Bill's line was, "Look at that square-looking guy. He looks innocent, then he brings in a horror story that scares the hell out of you."

ANDY: Is that the way you would describe the difference between your style and Jack Davis'?

EVANS: Jack was and is a great cartoonist. I did sort of straight illustration. The same sort of thing that was in the pulps. That was where I figured I'd go when I got out of the service, but the pulps were dying. The comics were the thing that succeeded them.

ANDY: Did you have a favorite writer that you worked with?

EVANS: Al Feldstein was writing just about everything, except the stuff that Harvey Kurtzman was doing. I guess in those days Al wrote all the scripts for everybody. It was later that they brought in other writers.

ANDY: Do any stories stick out in your mind? Or is there any work of yours that you are particularly proud of?

EVANS: It goes without saying that I liked it when they started Aces High. Unfortunately, I must have been the only one who liked it. It didn't do that well. But, on the horror stories, they saw what I described in the beginning: here's this square-looking guy and yet he comes in with all these things that are so scary. So, that's the sort of stuff they gave me. It was always some little guy, who wanted to get rid of his wife and she'd come out of the faucet... and there was the one about the guy who always yearned for a Cadillac, so they buried him in one.

I sort of enjoyed all of them, because Al wrote so well. It was fun to interpret the pictures. Al didn't attempt to have any input into the art. Harvey did, but Al would hand you the script, tell you what he had in mind as to the story, but the pictures were entirely up to the individual artist. I enjoyed just about all that he did.

ANDY: Al at least blocked out the flow of the story, because he wrote on the boards, right?

EVANS: That's right, right on the boards that we worked on.

ANDY: Did you like that or was it a little restricting?

EVANS: It was going to be a little restricting, because he laid them out according to the amount of copy. Sometimes the key picture of any given page would be so cramped with copy that you couldn't really do a picture. That was the story with *(Continued on page 50)*

DC's Tangl

The Unknown History of the Donenfeld Publishing Empire!

In Les Daniels' *DC Comics: Sixty Years of the World's Favorite Comic Book Heroes*, published in 1995 to commemorate its sixtieth anniversary, there is a passing mention that prior to acquiring the company from Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, Harry Donenfeld—the man who effectively owned DC for most of its first thirty years—published a line of pulp magazines that included *Spicy Detective Stories*. Buried in that casual, circumspect statement is an amazing tale of the pulp chain whose successes and tribulations helped make DC Comics what it is today.

Thanks to the following people who helped in the preparation of this article: Ron Goulart, Victor Berch, Dwayne H. Olson, Kenneth R. Johnson, Joe Lovece, and Mike Uslan.

d Roots!

By Will Murray

To fully appreciate this story, a short recap of DC's official origin is necessary. What is now DC Comics was started in 1935, by a famous pulp writer named Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson. A former military officer, Nicholson had been one of the star contributors to *Adventure*, one of the most prestigious pulp magazines ever. It was a career he fell into after his military career abruptly ended in 1922 when Nicholson was court-martialed for complaining to President Harding about "Prussianism," in the Army—a technical violation of the Articles of War. In late 1933, the Street & Smith publishing company hired Nicholson to ghost the adventures of their new aviation hero, Bill Barnes. Nicholson wrote six novels for Bill Barnes, Air Adventurer as "George L. Eaton," before dissatisfaction with his work prompted the editors to unceremoniously can him.

Only months later, Wheeler-Nicholson was suddenly at the helm of a new business venture, National Allied Magazines, which jumped into the burgeoning comic book industry with *New Fun Comics*. Unlike other comics magazines of the day, *New Fun Comics* was not merely a collection of newspaper comic strip reprints, but a showcase for all-original material. That simple fact—the result of Nicholson being unable to acquire reprint rights in an already competitive field—made the publisher and his magazine an early pioneer in the industry.

But being a pioneer and being a success are two different things. A poor businessman, Nicholson soon learned that when times were tight, the easiest people to get credit from were starving artists and writers. Batman creator Bob Kane recalled that Nicholson often stalled on payments to the talent:

"At one point, Nicholson had the jump on me for seven months worth of art. By that time I must have drawn a couple hundred comic book pages for him. When I finally lost my cool and threatened him with a lawsuit for the approximately twelve hundred dollars he owed me, he capitulated and promised to have a check for the entire amount the following day.

I eagerly awaited being paid off the next day and could hardly sleep that night. Arriving at his office bright and early on a train Friday morning, I found it completely empty. The chicken had flown the coop! I was as blue as that gloomy Friday. I continued to look for Major Nicholson for years, like other rooked artists, but could never find him."

Soon, Nicholson found himself in debt to printer Harry Donenfeld and his accountant Jacob "Jack" Leibowitz. The beginnings of the business relationship between Nicholson and Donenfeld are murky. The official version is that Donenfeld extended more and more credit to keep National Allied going, ultimately buying into the company when it fell upon difficult financial times, and exerting more and more influence. Donenfeld's influence on National's decision-making grew quickly in those early years.

I continued to look for Major Nicholson for years, like other rooked artists, but could never find him.
–Bob Kane

Working together, Nicholson and Donenfeld expanded their line. Nicholson's pulp background was strongly felt in the choice of new titles. Where he had written for or read such pulp magazines as *Adventure*, and *Detective Story Magazine*, he swiftly inaugurated comics versions of them all, specifically, *New Adventure Comics*, and *Detective Comics*. The last title was launched by a Nicholson-Donenfeld partnership under a new company named Detective Comics, Inc. at 480 Lexington Avenue.

In 1938, Nicholson's mounting debts forced him into receivership. Here again, the details are unclear. One account is that Donenfeld bought out the Major's share in Detective Comics, Inc. while Leibowitz purchased Nicholson's other titles at a bankrupt-

TANGLED ROOTS ART BY C_AYTON HINKLE

Super Mystery

The first announcement about Super Magazines came in the April, 1933 *Writer's Digest*. It was called Modern Publications, and the address was 53 Park Place. No titles were announced. Yet when it metamorphosed into Super Magazines only months later, the address was 60 Murray Street.

In the same issue, there was announcement of a new pulp chain to be edited by Martin Goodman. His address—53 Park Place! *Writer's Digest* made no connection between the two start-up companies other than their offices occupied the same building.

Once Goodman's Newsstand Publications—which included a pulp called *Western Supernovel*—got off the ground, they listed a new address too—60 Murray Street!

Were the early Goodman and Donenfeld pulp empires somehow connected? Did they move to new digs together?

Actually, no. A few issues later, *Writer's Digest* wondered in print why Goodman was now listing his "back door" as his mailing address. It turned out 60 Murray Street was the rear entrance to 53 Park Place!

This might explain why Donenfeld's *Super Western Stories* never got off the ground. Goodman had stolen his title. It also explains why Goodman's *Black Book Detective* ran what looked like a house ad for *Love Revels*, a Frank Armer-edited pulp issued by Forward Publications, a short-lived house. The two editors were cross-cooperating—at first.

It's fascinating to note that three of the mightiest comic book empires got their start in the same building during the worst year of the Depression. Three? For Newsstand, while edited by Goodman, was in fact owned by Louis Silberkleit, later to branch off and launch MLJ Publications (Archie)!

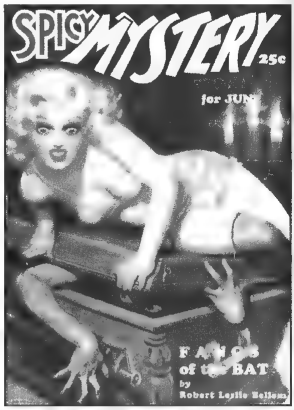
cy auction. Another suggests there were even whispers that Nicholson was made an offer he couldn't refuse by unnamed persons. What is known for certain is that Nicholson's last issue of *New Adventure* as publisher was #24, dated February, 1938. Issue #25 was published by Abraham L. Menin, receiver. The publisher of record became Detective Comics, Inc., with the May, 1938 issue. Donenfeld bought Nicholson out of the business for $19,703 and assumed all of Nicholson's debts. Nicholson returned to writing, and Donenfeld plowed ahead, expanding the newly-consolidated line with *Action Comics*, which bears the hallmark of a Nicholson idea. (It seems to have been inspired by a pulp called *Action Stories*.) Eventually, Donenfeld bought out a rival comics company or two until, by the early '40s, National Comics was the undisputed leader in the field.

Through all this, Nicholson's role as an innovator has been highlighted, relegating Donenfeld to the status of a mere businessman. But in actual fact, Donenfeld may have been as much of an innovator as Nicholson. While Donenfeld might seem to have jumped from being a pulp publisher onto the bandwagon of comic books, it was not such a long leap. Before *New Fun Comics* hit the nation's newsstands, Harry Donenfeld oversaw a sprawling publishing empire in which original comics heroes and heroines were an important part.

The Pulps, The Depression, & Sex

To put it all in perspective, you have to go back just a few short months before *New Fun Comics* hit the stands. The year was 1934. The Depression had severely hit the pulp magazine industry, which in the Twenties enjoyed million-copy circulations. Several pulp publishers had gone bankrupt. Those that remained searched frantically for new formulas, new concepts. The so-called "hero pulps"—The Shadow, Doc Savage and their many companions and imitators—were only part of that search. Pulps devoted to fast action, horror, and science fiction, aimed at a younger audience than before, proved to be the solution most publishers had sought. New magazines, even new publishers, came into being to take advantage of the new breed of pulp reader, one to whom fast action—called "bang-bang" by the editors—splashy covers, and larger than life, virtually superhuman characters, were the rage.

As always, the pulps embraced genre fiction. Detective and western pulps were top sellers. There was only one carefully avoided pulp taboo:



sex. There were sex magazines in those days, of course. They were not true pulps, but pamphlet- or bedsheet sized magazines with colorful pulp-like covers. They published mildly risqué short stories, jokes, gag panels, and sometimes brief comic strips, all devoted to hi-jinks between the sexes. At the time they were considered racy, but in a fun sort of way. Sex was suggested or implied. Drawings teased, but were not explicit. One of the leading publishers of this kind of adult entertainment was King Publications. The King line, which went as far back as *Pep* in 1916, had by the late Twenties included such titles as *Pep Stories*, and a new entry called *Spicy Stories*.

The heyday of these magazines had been the Twenties and although still popular, they too suffered from the Depression. Not long after the stock market crash of 1929, the King Publishing Company evaporates and the publisher of record is *Ramer Reviews*, at 120 West 42nd Street in Manhattan.

Simultaneously, Harry Donenfeld and his wife, Gussie, along with Jack Liebowitz, form the Merwil Publishing Company at 143 W. 20th Street. Merwil incorporated on August 10, 1929. The origin of the Merwil name is not clear, but since their editor of record was Merle W. Hersey

(sometimes given as Mrs. Merle W. Hersey) one can suppose Merwil cames from Merle W.

How long Donenfeld had been in this business is not clear. As early as 1926, an Elmo Press was publishing something called *Juicy Tales* at the Merwil address. It's not likely Donenfeld was associated with the original King Publications, but his Donny Press specialized in printing the vivid covers of the girlie magazines of the day, making him a key player in that branch of publishing.

Even after Merwil came into existence, it operated in a kind of nebulous twilight zone of company names. In 1930, Harry's brother Irving is ramrodding an outfit called the Irwin Publishing Company out of the Merwil offices. They published titles like *La Paree* and *Hot Stories*, edited by Merle W. Hersey or Marianne Marle—who may have been one and the same. They were also the subject of numerous complaints from freelance writers for non-payment. So numerous were these complaints that by the summer of 1931, Irwin Publishing quietly folded and its surviving magazines all became Merwil titles. The complaints continued as before.

Along the way, Donenfeld became allied with publisher Frank Armer. Like Donenfeld, Armer's publishing career becomes vaguer the further back one attempts to trace it. In 1925, he founded *Ramer Reviews*, a pulp house that put out titles like *Artists and Models Magazine* (which published nude photographs under the guise of being an artists' publication), *Airplane Stories*, and the legendary and short-lived *Zeppelin Stories*, among other titles. Ramer was an anagram for Armer. In 1929, around the time their line of action pulps abruptly collapses, *Ramer Reviews* picked up—or revived—King's *Pep Stories* and launched *Spicy Stories*. Soon, the line grew to include such entries as *Wow, Broadway Nights, Frolics* and *Ginger Stories*.

Despite the Depression, *Ramer Reviews* seemed to do well under editor Natalie Messenger. But while sales may have been good, distributors were going out of business, taking publishers with them. This may have been the ultimate fate of *Ramer Reviews*.

According to the December, 1932 *Writer's Review*, Harry Donenfeld and his brother, Irwin (aka Irving), acquired these two titles, *Pep* and *Spicy Stories*, from the related firms of Narvel and Follywood, which had gone bankrupt months before. For a brief time in 1933, these titles were published by the Donny Press, whose address was the famous address DC Comics had in its first decade or so: 480 Lexington Avenue in New York City! Donenfeld moved his operation to 480 Lexington at the time of the *Spicy Stories* acquisition.

Whether Narvel and Follywood were simply corporate masks for *Ramer Reviews* is undiscoverable. But it's highly likely that Armer lost these and other titles in the same way that publisher J. C. Henneberger lost the pulp magazine *Weird Tales*. When *Weird Tales* became indebted to his printer, the magazine was turned over to him in lieu of payment. Donenfeld likely acquired Armer's publishing interests in the same way, and this was exactly the circumstance under which the financially-strapped Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson was ultimately ousted from National Allied Publishing a few years later.

This was probably the beginning of the true Donenfeld publishing empire. The Merwil line soon grew to include titles like *Bedtime Stories, Broadway Follies* and *La Paree*, which sometimes contained ads offering silk hose, two pairs for a dollar, from a J. Donenfeld of Faile Street, Manhattan. A tight-knit group of authors were soon busily pecking out risqué sketches like "Sweet Sexteen," "Flesh," and similarly titillating titles. The most frequent contributors to these magazines were Ken Cooper, Arthur Wallace, Frank E. Marks, Claire Kennedy, Don King, Bob Maxwell and Robert Leslie Bellem. Of this list, only the last name can be said with certainty to have belonged to a real person. Claire Kennedy was probably Cecile Glasberg, a *Ramer Reviews* editor who joined Merwil early in 1934 to take over Mrs. Merle W. Hersey's responsibilities, and who edited Donenfeld magazines under an assortment of aliases like Claire Glasberg and Claire Glass. Maxwell's real name was Robert Maxwell Joffe.

Super & Spicy

Merwil had several affiliated publishing ventures, including the tongue-in-cheek Culture Publications, which published the descendants of *Artists and Models Magazine*. They also bought *The Police Gazette* in 1934! (It soon failed, leaving Mrs. Hersey jobless.)

At the same time, Frank Armer, after failing with a 1933 magazine called *Love Revels* for Forward Publications, began editing a string of titles for a new publishing entity with the evocative name of Super *(Continued on page 56)*

Doing the Editorial Shuffle

Although National Comics grew out of Harry Donenfeld's Trojan Publishing pulp chain, his powerful editorial staff was literally raided from the editorial staff of pulp rival Ned Pines' Standard Publications.

Whitney Ellsworth, who had briefly worked for Wheeler-Nicholson's National Allied Publications, was hired in 1940.

He, in turn, co-opted his old Standard pulp editor, Mort Weisinger. When Mort was drafted into the Army in 1942, he installed Jack Schiff as his stand-in for the duration. Schiff, who had hired Weisinger for Standard back in 1935, then brought Bernard Breslauer over from Standard.

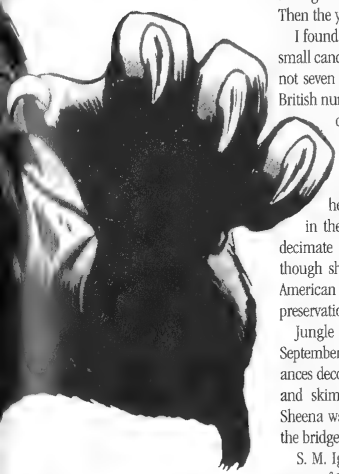
The last major DC editor to climb on board in the 1940s, Julius Schwartz, had no connection with Standard. He came over with DC's acquisition of All-American Comics. But he was Weisinger's best friend, thus completing the circle of association.

The Forgo

Russ Heath's inspired rendition of Lorna from the cover of **Jungle Girl** #7 (May 1954).

tten Jungle Queen!

The most underrated Jungle Girl in comic book history



by
Hicky Wright

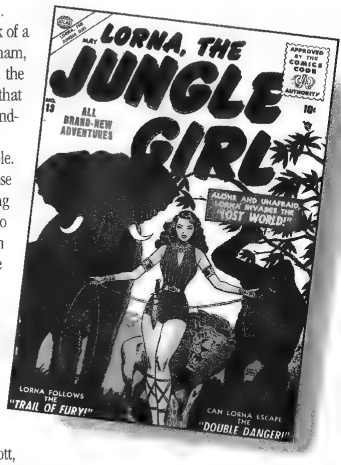
The time was the mid-fifties. A young lad not quite sure of himself, not realizing he was undergoing the change from child to manhood, suddenly found his interest in Captain Marvel's dashing adventures of derring-do were on the wane. Instead he was attracted to the nubile forms of the opposite sex, and natural desires enveloped him. But he still liked comic books. British editions of American comics such as *The Saint, Sam Hill,* and *Planet Comics*. All had tasty samplings of the female shape dotted throughout; a touch of lingerie here, a dash of curvaceous hips there. Then the young lad discovered Lorna. That young lad was me….

I found a British edition of *Lorna* displayed on the comic rack of a small candy/newspaper shop in the English country town of Farnham, not seven miles from my home. The comic was post-Code and the British numbering was issue #1 (#6 in America). It was the cover that caught my youthful eye. Lorna looked very fetching, standing in a river, spear in hand, battling crocodiles.

To my young mind, Lorna looked very desirable. Much more so than other jungle queen comics whose heroines seemed bent on killing everything and anything in their sight. Lorna was refreshing… she wasn't trying to decimate the animal population like her contemporaries. Even though she killed a few creatures early on, by issue #5 of the American run, Lorna was becoming concerned with animal preservation. We'll look at that a little later.

Jungle girls had been staple fare for the comics since September 1938 when Sheena made her first of many appearances decorating the pages of *Jumbo Comics*. Buxom, blonde, and skimpily attired in some unfortunate leopard's skin, Sheena was stirring, bloodthirsty fare for youngsters crossing the bridge into manhood.

S. M. Iger, who helped bring Sheena into being, and T. T. Scott, owner of Fiction House Magazines, publisher of the blonde bombshell's jungle adventures, discovered they had tapped into a profitable seam. Soon jungle-based damsels clad in next to nothing, turned up all over the place. There was a bunch of them at Fiction House. Ka-anga, a Tarzan clone had Ann, a sexy brunette who had a thing for bondage. The shapely lass always seemed to be tied, roped, or chained on the covers of *Jumbo Comics*. Also in the same book there was the attractive Camilla, a lady who abided no nonsense from man nor beast. In June 1944, one of the best jungle girls turned up in *Fight*



The cover of Lorna, The Jungle Girl #13 by Sid Shores (May 1955).

Comics. This was Tiger Girl who eventually was drawn with loving care by Matt Baker, who is probably better known for his epic Phantom Lady art.

America was in the war. Kansas bred farm boys became fighting machines on the battlefields of Europe and Asia. All the good things that made up the American Way, went with them. Coca-Cola, Hershey bars, Wrigley's, movies, and comic books, helped keep youngsters hardly dry behind the ears from thinking what horrors might befall them on the battlefield. Movie stars like Rita Hayworth told them what was waiting at home, and the jungle girl comics were pleasurable excursions into short but delicious fantasy.

LOOK, MIKKI! THE TRIBES ARE STARTING UP AGAIN...GOING BACK TO THEIR ANCIENT WAYS! THEY'RE LIGHTING THE VOODOO FIRES TO MAMALU! I DON'T LIKE IT ONE BIT!
VOODOO MADNESS

Seductive and beautifully drawn Werner Roth splash panel from Lorna #6. Note Lorna's sexy pose, laced top, and generous anatomy.

After the war was won and the G.I.s came home to rapturous welcomes, the comic book industry found the many superheroes who fought against Hitler and Hirohito were redundant. There was nothing for them to do anymore, and they quietly faded away. Not so the girls. In fact, more arrived on the scene. By 1947 Victor Fox, who published a series of ho-hum adventure comics during the war, turned his funny animal titles into jungle and "good girl art" comics. Rulah was Fox's mainstay on the jungle front, her escapades decidedly risqué compared to Fiction House heroines. In fact, Rulah had every Freudian cliché in her resume. Snakes… lots of snakes…, bondage, domination, decapitation, you name it, Rulah had it.

By 1950 the comics industry had changed direction once again. Horror was the new rage; shortly almost every publisher would be jumping onto a bandwagon pioneered by the American Comics Group and EC. Jungle girls and good girls started to fall away. By 1953 many Fiction House titles were laid to rest, the final issues of *Fight* and *Jungle Comics* appearing in 1954. Even the staunch, but prudish Nyoka finished with Fawcett in June 1953, though she continued with Charlton until 1957.

Then in July 1953, Martin Goodman's once Timely, then Atlas comics, introduced Lorna, the Jungle Queen.

When one thinks about it, this was a very odd move by Atlas, home of the great, pioneering Stan Lee. Nobody wanted jungle girls anymore, yet here was Atlas flogging what appeared to be a marketing dead horse. Martin Goodman and Stan Lee were always at the forefront or with the latest comics fashion, so Lorna would seem an odd choice. Maybe she was, but in my humble opinion she was the very best of the whole jungle girl genre. Unfortunately, nobody seems to know much about her.

"Lorna the Jungle Girl? Oh, for God's sake!" Those were the words uttered by Stan Lee when I asked him about this more than well endowed blonde. "All I remember of her was her name. I think somebody named Werner Roth drew her at some time, but that is all I remember." I decided to try comics' good girl art historian Bill Black, the publisher of many good girl reprint comics under the AC banner. Yes, he had written a piece on Lorna, but even his information was sketchy. So we will have to use guesswork, and if we are wrong, hopefully some knowledgeable *CBM* reader will correct us. Still, Stan Lee was able to fill in one or two gaps:

"I really don't remember why we came out with Lorna, then Jann of the Jungle when we did," Stan said, "But I came up with both of those names. I created the names; I probably created the characters. This is just strictly a guess but probably my publisher, Martin Goodman, said to me: "Stan I want you to bring out a couple of jungle books." Stan stopped for a minute, deep in thought.

"I was the editor at the time," continued Stan. "I might have had an artist (Werner Roth) who was particularly good at drawing females. And I might have thought I've gotta get a book for him to draw, and I might've just done it just to keep an artist busy." Now here is a different perspective on comic book history. When have you heard of a character being created to take advantage of an artist's talents? Seldom, I am sure. But that's the way it was in those heady days.

Stan Lee may have created Lorna either because Martin Goodman wanted a jungle girl comic, or to keep a talented artist busy, but he did not write the stories. He said if they were not signed by him, then he didn't write them. Which may explain why some of them in the 26 issue run are a little weak.

As I mentioned earlier, the beautiful Lorna tended to preserve, rather than decimate, wild life. She rarely killed fauna and this wasn't because of the Code. In issue #6 Lorna confronts a charging rhino in the lead story called "Wildfire." Maddened by the raging fire the rhino heads for Lorna, who jumps on its back, twists it over on its back, thus knocking it out. Lorna steps back and says: "It's only stunned! Maybe after it wakes up it'll be out of its madness!" As for Lorna, she looks stunning. Artist Werner Roth was a master of his craft as can be

seen in the drawings of Lorna. Admittedly, her Dolly Partons are a shade too large, Roth obviously delighted in depicting Lorna in a lot of bent over, flying from vine to vine, swimming under water positions to enable him to accentuate her chesty talents. Be that as it may, she looked superb.

Returning to the fact that Lorna obviously cared for her jungle domain and its flora and fauna, I asked Stan Lee whether it was deliberate policy to avoid the mayhem prevalent in the earlier Fiction House and Fox jungle comics. To which he replied without hesitation:

"I'm not a big fan of killing, especially of killing animals." Short. To the point. And probably, as Stan was editor, why the Lorna stories continually harped on preservation rather than death.

Now let us go to July 1953 when *Lorna* first appeared on the newsstands. This was a time when horror was rife throughout the industry. Even the benign Captain Marvel got himself entangled in a few horror tales. So the first cover of *Lorna* has her swinging from a vine, drawing her trusty dagger as she spies a not very well drawn gorilla baring its teeth at her. Below there's a bunch of natives struggling to hold a kicking, fighting white man. Under the title are the words: "One valiant girl, alone and unafraid, against the savage (now in big letters) TERRORS OF THE JUNGLE!" Not dangers, not perils, no, TERRORS!

Our introduction to the "Jungle Queen," as she was originally known in classic Marvel/Atlas tradition, has the "Coming of Lorna" as the lead story in issue #1. Lorna and her father run a lonely trading post in the African jungle. The elderly man is lying in a hammock, smoking a pipe, and saying: "The jungle has been my home for 35 years, Lorna! I love it with all my heart!" Suddenly Lorna cries out: "Father...Look out! Behind you!" No messing about...it's immediate action!

Frame three has a ferocious lion leaping at Lorna's dad. "Arghhh!" snarls the lion in big red letters. Dad says "Numa! The lion!" Next you see him shooting the lion to death, but not before the creature has severely hurt his leg.

There is no doctor around so Lorna relies on M'Tuba (whew, what a name), the faithful guide. He does what he can for her father while she goes hunting, though why she is hunting in not explained. Perhaps it is for food, though I think a rhinoceros is not very palatable leaving one to surmise that perhaps her father's trading post sold rhino horn aphrodisiacs! In those far off days, anything was possible, wasn't it?

Mercy me! The rhino catches Lorna's scent and comes charging toward her. She aims her rifle and it jams...must have been one of those cheap Spanish jobs popular at the time. "Like a thundering juggernaut," says the caption, "the maddened rhino charged, as the terrified girl stood squarely in its path...."

The next caption tells us the obvious. Lorna thinks with lightning speed to save herself, which she does by throwing herself flat onto the ground, and the rhino charges over her. Leaping to her feet, Lorna races for the trees closely followed by the none too friendly rhino. Then, before the beast reaches the tree, a spear embeds itself in the animal's hide.

Lorna's savior is M'Tuba who comes with bad news. Her beloved father had perished from his wounds which were more severe than first thought. Lorna is grief-stricken, but vows over her father's grave to be what he wanted. She throws away the Spanish rifle saying she doesn't want weapons that jam "...or get out of order!" M'Tuba promises to teach her how to use a spear and knife to hunt with. It should be noted that in the first three or four issues, Lorna speared or knifed a leopard or two, with a couple of snakes and a crocodile thrown in for good measure. Maybe it was Stan Lee who decided Lorna should develop as a woman concerned with the protection of jungle life rather than indiscriminately slaughtering it.

Lorna, who obviously favored Nyoka's mode of dress in the first few pages of her first story, killed two leopards by page five. One with her spear, the other with her knife. M'Tuba was proud of her abilities and said to her: "Little mistress...there is no more I can teach you! Already you are my master at spears, knives, tracking and hunting! It is you who should teach me!" By now Lorna has discarded her Nyoka garb and was attired in what looked like a skin tight tiger top and a leopard mini skirt. She wore a necklace made up of animal fangs. A wide leather belt encircled her tiny waist. Now, back to the story....

Suddenly Lorna and M'Tuba are captured by the Wafisi tribe and taken to their village. Where they are tied to a thick stake in readiness for sacrifice. All round the village Lorna notices decapitated heads on stakes.

M'Tuba whispers to little Mikki who is perched on his shoulder: "Mikki...My knife...In my sheath...Quick!" The monkey hands Lorna the knife and she *(Continued on page 68)*

Lorna, The Jungle Queen #2 (Aug 1953), cover by Brodsky and Lorna, The Jungle Girl #19 (scarce British edition) published by L. Miller & Son LTD. London, published just after the Comics Code.

Witch

Harvey's first

BY MIKE HOWLETT

To many people, Harvey Comics mean Casper, Richie Rich, Baby Huey, and the likes, but pre-Code horror fans know differently! From early 1951 through the end of 1954, Harvey Publications put some of the finest horror comics onto America's newsstands. Artists like Bob Powell, Howard Nostrand, sometimes editor Lee Elias, and the underrated Rudy Palais kept up the visual end of titles like *Black Cat Mystery, Chamber of Chills, Tomb of Terror,* and,of course, *Witches Tales*. (For more info on Harvey's overall horror output and history, see Mark Arnold's article and checklist in *CBM* #29 and NEC's *Tales Too Terrible To Tell* #8.)

In response to the horror craze started in the comic industry by the successful EC titles, Harvey Publishing (under the guise of

Witches Tales Inc.) came out with *Witches Tales* #1 in January 1951, their first horror comic. Containing a good story by Rudy Palais and a nice filler page by Bob Powell, it's OK... but, like many pre-Code horror titles, *Witches Tales* took a while to warm up and find a groove.

Harvey was one of the few publishers to feature a contents page in their horror comics. In *Witches Tales*, this page also contained a "Message from the Witch," where our nameless hostess tried to set the mood, as well as solicit letters. In issue #4 (July 51), she actually bribed readers with $2 for any letter that got printed, and we got a short-lived letters column (a rarity outside of EC). Early issues also offered readers a page of "Witches Tricks," which showed us how to do such spooky magic as the ol' "finger-through-the-hole-in-the-box" trick!

Along with kid-friendly magic tricks, these early issues also feature some pretty nasty bondage and torture covers. *Witches Tales* #5 (September 1951) has no less than three captives on the cover! Inside, it also has a killer (pun intended) 10-page Bob Powell story, "Spell of the Black Gloves" , a tale of witchcraft, underworld crime, and revenge! The issue also has two particularly gruesome stories by Rudy Palais, "Share My Coffin" and "Curse of the Caterpillar."

The sixth offering is dated November 1951, and gives us a flame-filled, 8-page Lee Elias story, plus two (count 'em two) Bob Powell gems! These include the infamous and incredible "Green Horror," in which you see a woman turn into a frog before your very eyes! It just doesn't get any better than this! That is until #10 (May 1952) featuring the classic story "It," a 7-page Bob Powell spectacular. It's pretty obvious that I love Bob Powell's artwork, but anyone who collects great art and or pre-Code horror will appreciate this tale. It's the story of an avenging blob… and pulsating, oozing, amoebae-like blobs were certainly one of Mr. Powell's strong suits.

But Rudy Palais was definitely Harvey's "liquid asset" (sorry). Rudy's characters were constantly sweating, drooling and bleeding in drops, streams, and gushes! Palais-drawn characters would even sweat… just standing still! *Witches Tales* #12 (July 1952) gives us his gooeyist splatter-fest yet, the amazing "Man with the Iron Face." I challenge anyone to eat a bowl of soup (yeeech) while reading this story! In issue #15 (October 1952), Rudy Palais keeps the juices flowing with "Art for Deaths Sake" another horrible and highly collectible classic.

By issue #18 (April 1953), things are really cooking in the pages of *Witches Tales*. By then, Howard Nostrand had worked his way into the stable of artists, and in issue #18 contributes two great stories (plus two filler pages!) Not only is Nostrand's drawing style similar to that of EC's Jack Davis, but the stories take on a decidedly "EC flavor" complete with twist endings and clever gruesomeness as the norm.

Witches Tales #19 (June 1953) introduces Nostrand's classic "Mother Mongoose's Nursery Crimes," a 1-page retelling of classic nursery rhymes in the style of EC's Grim Fairy Tales. It seems EC horror mags weren't the only comics to have an influence on these later issues as the success of *MAD* clearly added to the "inspiration" of Harvey's writers.

The issues with Powell and Nostrand art, and inspiration derived (some

es Tales...

horror comic!

"Coming further, he became disturbed. He tilted his battered hat back to the peak of his head, allowing two antennae to pop out..."

might say swiped!) from EC are the most sought after of the run, and for good reason–they are simply GREAT! Of special note is *Witches Tales* #21 (October 1953) which features Powell's "The Invasion," lifted from Orson Welles' famous "War of the Worlds" broadcast. There are also some well done, but obvious SuspenStory lifts, which make for some great reading.

With issue #23 dated February 1954 (not February 1953 as the indicia incorrectly states), the humor element gets pushed to the forefront of editorial policy. The cover cameos a goofy looking barber fitting a wig onto a cigarette smoking skeleton! The introduction on the contents page tells us that this issue will "chill your spine–and tickle your funny bone!" To this end, Nostrand supplies "Ivan's-Woe," the first "Boo of the Month story" a parody of famous books. Mr. Nostrand draws in a Wally Wood-style this time, complete with overt swipes from Wood's work in *Two-*

Fisted Tales #34 (July/August 1953).

Witches Tales #25 (June 1954) features what many historians consider to be one of Harvey's most extreme covers! Its rotting, severed-head bell clapper more than holds it's own against Harvey's other notorious extreme covers… *Tomb of Terror* #15 (exploding head) and *Black Cat Mystery* #50 (radium burning off face).

Inside #25 we get more great art, including Nostrand's (very) odd "What's Happening at 8:30 PM," the tale of a humanoid protagonist wandering through a deserted, slushy, red cityscape. I won't give the whole thing away, but I promise you that it's very different from most other pre-Code horror stories!

With Dr. Wertham and the Comics Code right around the corner, *Witches Tales*, like most other horror comics, quickly fizzled out in late 1954. Issue #27 (October 1954) reprinted

issue #6 and *Witches Tales* #28 (December 1954) reprinted issue #8. Then… *Witches Tales* was no more. It changed into one of the most incredible and preposterous mixed genre transition titles in comic book history… *Witches Western Tales*! Alas, the two-issue run only contained standard western fare. (Too bad–imagine a pioneering western-horror book? Think of the possibilities!)

Putting together a run of *Witches Tales* is not that tough as they are pretty common and still relatively cheap in mid grades. *Gerber* doesn't assign an SI (scarcity index) higher than four to any issue and *Overstreet* lists most issues under $50 in FN!

Good stories, good fun, and great art in easy to find, affordable historic pre-Code comics... that makes *Witches Tales* a real Halloween bargain! ■

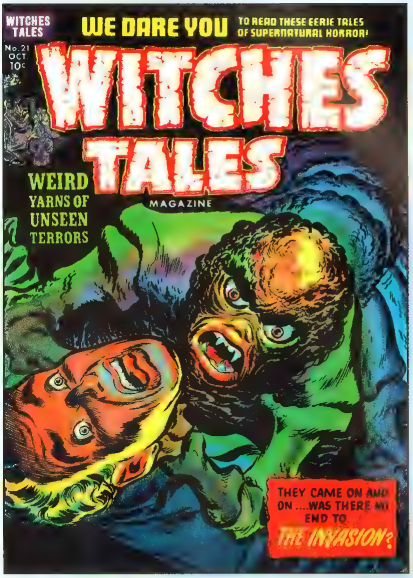
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MUNICH IN THE YEAR 1871, ECCENTRIC GENIUS, PROFESSOR CARL VON HEIMER, DISCOVERED WHAT HE THOUGHT WAS THE SECRET OF LIFE!...THE MYSTERY THAT HAS DEFIED SCIENTISTS SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME! VON HEIMER WAS TO LEARN, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAD ACTUALLY DISCOVERED...
IT!
HIMMEL! LOOK, GRETA! LOOK! MY MASSES OF PROTOPLASM! THEY BREATHE! AND SOON THEY WILL LIVE!
CONFIDENT THAT HE HAD CONQUERED THE RIDDLE OF THE AGES, PROFESSOR VON HEIMER WENT BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY'S EXECUTIVE BOARD TO INFORM THEM OF HIS STARTLING DISCOVERY!... NEVER DREAMING THAT HE WOULD BE REBUKED...
THAT'S ABSURD, PROFESSOR! WE'LL HEAR NO MORE OF IT! YOU MUST LEAVE THE UNIVERSITY IMMEDIATELY!

Rudy Palais splash (and we do mean splash) panel from "Man With the Iron Face" published in Witches Tales #12 (Jul 1952). Palais' distinct horror style always featured excessive sweating, dripping, and other gooey delights!

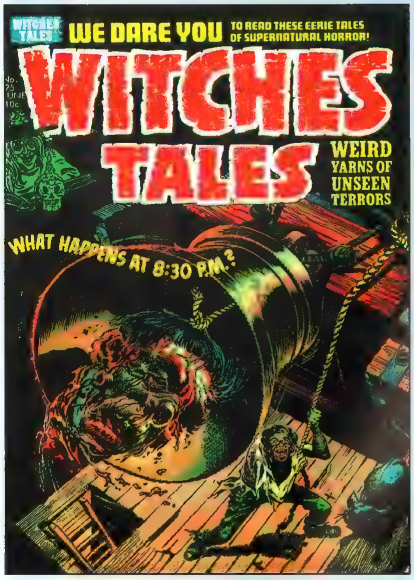
Bob Powell's incredible yarn, "IT!" (Witches Tales #10, May 1952), is one of the all-time great oozing, pulsating blob stories.

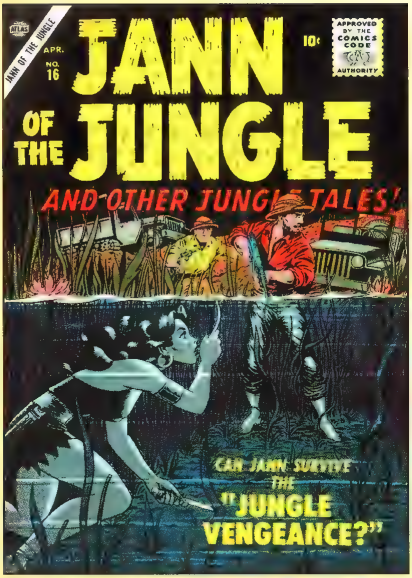
(FACING PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT)
Witches Tales #5 (Sep 1951), #21 (Oct 1953), #25 (Jun 1954), and #23 (Feb 1954).

WITCHES TALES
WE DARE YOU TO READ THESE EERIE TALES OF SUPERNATURAL HORROR!
WITCHES TALES
WEIRD YARNS OF UNSEEN TERRORS
10¢
Read CURSE OF THE CATERPILLAR
Share my Coffin
THE SPELL OF THE BLACK GLOVES


WITCHES TALES
WE DARE YOU TO READ THESE EERIE TALES OF SUPERNATURAL HORROR!
No. 21 OCT 10¢
WITCHES TALES
WEIRD YARNS OF UNSEEN TERRORS
MAGAZINE
THEY CAME ON AND ON....WAS THERE NO END TO THE INVASION?

WITCHES TALES
WE DARE YOU TO READ THESE EERIE TALES OF SUPERNATURAL HORROR!
WITCHES TALES
WEIRD YARNS OF UNSEEN TERRORS
MAGAZINE
A HAIR-RAISING TALE IS THE TALE OF... THE WIG MAKER!


WITCHES TALES
WE DARE YOU TO READ THESE EERIE TALES OF SUPERNATURAL HORROR!
WITCHES TALES
WEIRD YARNS OF UNSEEN TERRORS
WHAT HAPPENS AT 8:30 P.M.?



Jann Of The Jungle #16 (Apr 1957)

Lorna, The Jungle Girl #23 (Feb 1957)

Lorna, The Jungle Girl #22 (Dec 1956)

LORNA, THE JUNGLE GIRL
AUG.
NO. 26
10¢
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
NO MATTER WHERE I TURN, I'M TRAPPED!
BE ON HAND FOR THE "RETURN OF THE OUTCAST!"
WHAT HAPPENS TO LORNA WHEN "IT STALKS BY NIGHT!"

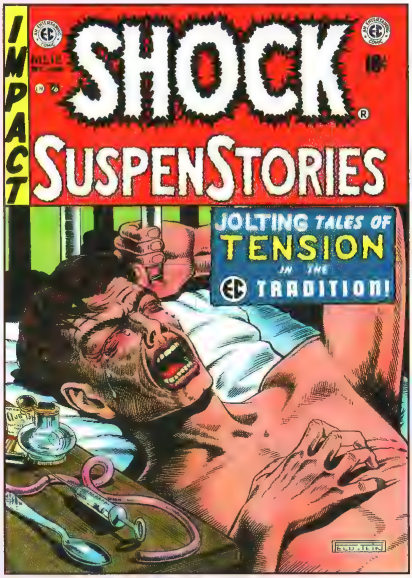
Lorna, The Jungle Girl #26 (Aug 1957)

Lorna, The Jungle Queen #1 (Jul 1953)

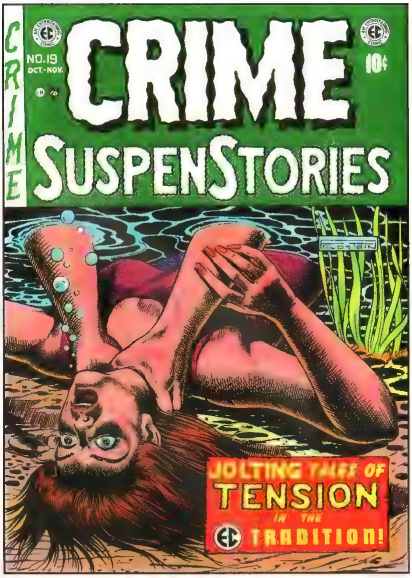
Lorna, The Jungle Girl #6 (Feb 1954)

Jungle Action #1 (Oct 1954)

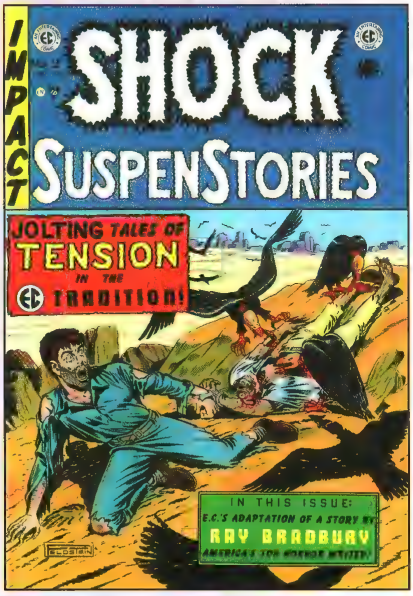
Jungle Tales #1 (Sep 1954)



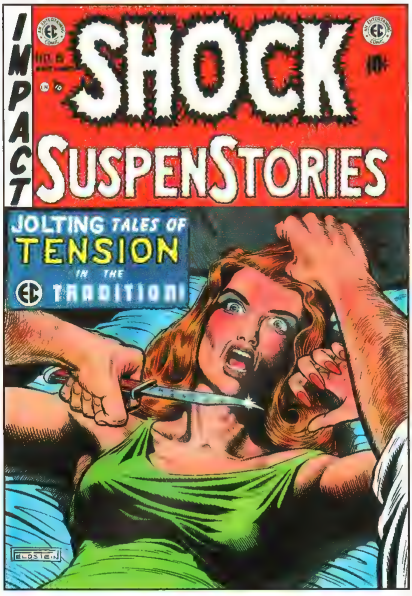
Shock SuspenStories #12 (Dec 1953/Jan 1954)



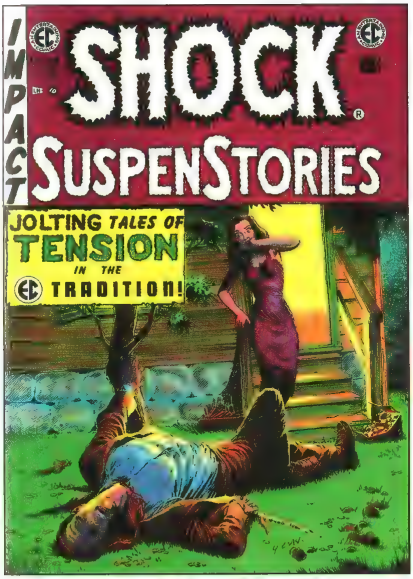
Crime SuspenStories #19 (Oct/Nov 1953)



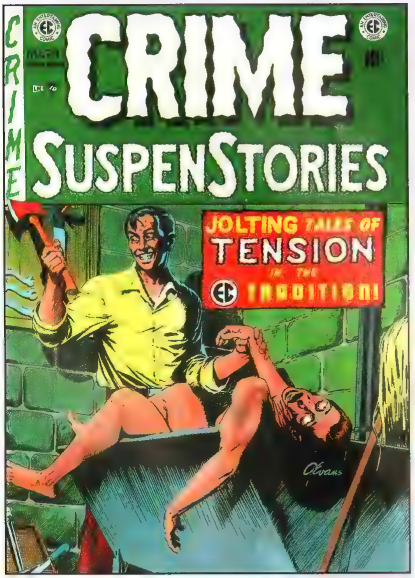
Shock SuspenStories #9 (Jun/Jul 1953)



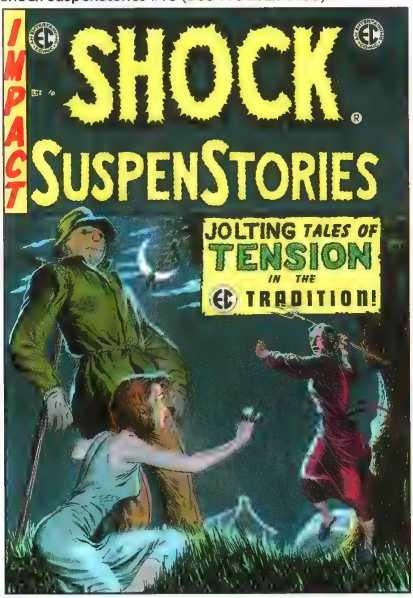
Shock SuspenStories #8 (Apr/May 1953)



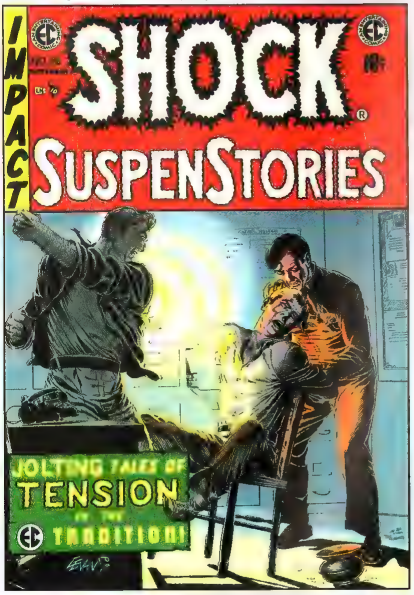
Shock SuspenStories #18 (Dec 1954/Jan 1955)



Crime SuspenStories #24 (Aug/Sep 1954)



Shock SuspenStories #17 (Oct/Nov 1954)



Shock SuspenStories #16 (Aug/Sep 1954)

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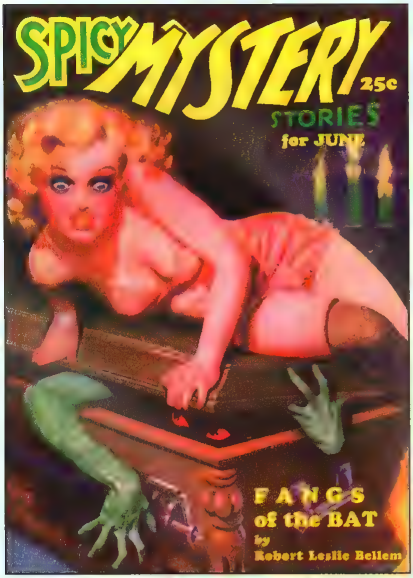
Dan Turner- Hollywood Detective (Jul 1943)

Spicy-Adventure Stories (Mar1935)

Spicy Mystery Stories (Oct 1937)

Spicy Mystery (Dec 1937)

Spicy-Adventure Stories (Jul 1937



Spicy Mystery Stories #2 (1st distib. issue; Jun 1935)

Spicy Mystery Stories (Nov 1937)

Dan Turner- Hollywood Detective (Jan 1943)

Spicy Mystery Stories (Feb 1936)

Spicy Detective Stories (Jan 1935)

Hollywood Detective (Feb 1949, note "16 pgs of Comics")

Spicy Detective Stories (Sep 1937)

DC'S VERY FIRST TITLE!

New Fun!

THE BIRTH OF AN INDUSTRY

BY JON BERK

Of the short-lived titles of the 1930s and 1940s, none is as rare nor as important to the history of comic books as *New Fun*, subtitled "The Big Comic Magazine." Although *New Fun* was to continue as *More Fun Comics* with the seventh issue and then to continue on to issue #127, *New Fun* deserves to qualify as a "short-lived" title, due to its tabloid size and retained name throughout its six issue run. This title was the first venture of National Allied Publishing which, as it later combined with All-American Publishing, was to evolve into the comic book empire better known as DC comics.

NEW FUN
THE BIG COMIC MAGAZINE
10
JACK WOODS
NEW COMIC STRIPS • AIRCRAFT • RADIO • MOVIES
STORIES • ADVENTURE • MYSTERY • SPORTS • PRIZES

New Fun was the inaugural title of the company which was soon to produce comic book titles such as *New Comics/New Adventure/Adventure Comics*, *Detective Comics*, and, *Action Comics*, which featured the most significant comic book character of all time–"Superman." The *New Fun* series ran monthly for the first four issues from February 1935 to May 1935, then in August, 1935 for the fifth issue and October 1935 for the sixth issue. (The reincarnation as *More Fun* #7 did not take place until January 1936.)

Rounding out the run is the *Big Book of Fun Comics*. This was a 48 page "annual" with cardboard covers that reprinted, in no particular order, various strips from the first four issues. It was advertised in the sixth issue as follows: "If you want to follow the antics and adventures of the comic characters that have appeared in previous issues of *New Fun*, you will find them in that book."

Although the ad indicated the book could be found at the local five and dime store, the book, as produced, had no price on it nor any advertising, leading to speculation that, perhaps, it was some sort of premium.

All of the books in this series are extremely rare. Probably for any one issue no more than ten, maybe fifteen copies exist, if that. Of those that do exist, most grade Fair, Good to Very Good due to the oversized structure of the book. Pre-eminent DCologists, Gary M. Carter and Lane Carter have opined (in the 1983 *Overstreet*, #13) that *New Fun* #2 is the rarest of the series followed by *Big Book of Fun Comics*. My observations are that the sixth issue, along with *Big Book* are the rarest of the series. However, at this rarity level, one is splitting hairs. The number count for these issues is probably in the range of five to ten.

At the time of its first issue (February 1935) the only other "comic book" on the newsstand was *Famous Funnies* #7. *Famous Funnies* reprinted newspaper strips of the day. As legend goes, the format of *Famous Funnies* was conceived by Harry Wildenberg, sales manager of Eastern Color Company of Waterbury, Connecticut, to take up some of the slack time available on the presses. Eastern Color produced many of the Sunday comic funnies for the New York newspapers. Wildenberg noted that the standard tabloid comic pages when folded in half yielded an appealing sized book which could be run on Eastern's presses. Adding a glossy cover, Wildenberg, together with M.C. Gaines, a salesman for Eastern Color, came up with the idea in 1933 of reprinting comic strips and giving away the books as premiums. After the initial success of the giveaways of *Funnies on Parade, Carnival of Comics* and *Century of Comics*, financial backing was obtained to "experiment" and try to sell a comic book. This resulted in

the production of *Famous Funnies* Series #1 (which was distributed only in the greater New York area) in early 1934. Apparently, this experiment was successful enough so that *Famous Funnies* #1 was released with a cover date of July 1934. This was the first newsstand comic book series of the "modern" format.

DOCTOR OCCULT, the Ghost Detective
By LEGER and REUTHS
DR. OCCULT, THE GHOST DETECTIVE, HAS SWORN TO COMBAT SUPER-NATURAL EVIL IN THIS WORLD
PASSING AN ALLEY ONE EVENING, HE HEARS A CRY FOR HELP — AND ACTS!
A VAMPIRE!
T-THANK YOU! W-WHAT WAS IT?
NEVER MIND. JUST GO HOME AND REST.- HERE'S MY CARD IN THE EVENT YOU SHOULD EVER NEED ME.
WHEN THE VICTIM OF THE ATTACK REACHES HOME...
SANDER! YOURE PALE! WHAT'S HAPPENED?
NOTHING, DEAR
BUT THAT NIGHT — —
RECEIVING AN URGENT PHONE CALL NEXT MORNING, OCCULT SPEEDS TO SANDER AMSTER'S RESIDENCE.
IT'S AS I FEARED! THE TWO PIN-PRICKS ON HER THROAT ARE THE MARKS OF A VAMPIRE!
AFTER FIRST PLACING MRS AMSTER UNDER STRICT GUARD IN A PRIVATE SANITARIUM, DR OCCULT SUBSTITUTES HIS LOVELY ASSISTANT, ROSE PSYCHIC, IN HER BED.
THAT EVENING, HIS TRAP SET, HE WAITS TENSELY IN A CLOSET WHILE MONOTONOUS HOURS DRAG SLOWLY BY.
OCCULT! HELP!
DR. OCCULT'S MAGIC SYMBOL HAS NO EFFECT UPON THE VAMPIRE! — — ROSE AND HE ARE AT ITS MERCY!
TO BE CONTINUED
©1934, NATIONAL ALLIED PUBLICATIONS, Inc.

New Fun represented the next step in the evolution of this entertainment medium in that the book contained original–not reprint material. Actually, the idea of all original material had been tried in 1929 with the introduction of *The Funnies* by George Delacorte. Oversized like the Sunday funnies, the series never caught on. (Delacorte was to return in 1936 with *Popular Comics* and *The Funnies*–now as a "standard" sized comic book. Such were the foundational titles for a company which would soon be known as Dell Comics.) Gulf Oil Company also had produced original material in tabloid size beginning in the early 1930s to be given away as premiums at its gas stations. Also appearing in 1933 with original material and sold on the newsstand was *Detective Dan* and *Ace King*. Although not of the exact format of the modern comic books, these books are important in the developmental history of comics as spotlighted in *CBM* #36.

New Fun went beyond the predecessor tabloid titles and presented original adventure strips as well as the traditional "funny pages."

Although greatness was in store for this title and the company that produced it, *New Fun* had, at best, a shaky start. *New Fun* was produced at the initiative of Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, a retired Major. Wheeler-Nicholson had tried his hand at writing adventure stories for pulp publications. In 1934 he ventured into producing original comic magazine material. According to his autobiography, as quoted by Ron Goulart, Wheeler-Nicholson was "born in the South, raised on a western ranch, worked for a while as a cub reporter, became a second lieutenant of cavalry in the regular army, chased bandits on the Mexican border, fought fevers and played polo in the Philippines, led a battalion of infantry against the Bolsheviki in Siberia, helped straighten out the affairs of the army in France, commanded the headquarters cavalry of the American force in the Rhine and left the army as a major equipped with a select assortment of racing and polo cups, a sabre, and a busted typewriter."

Although it was obviously intended to compete with *Famous Funnies*, *New Fun* was, apparently, a tight-budget

product. *Famous Funnies* was all in color and 64 pages in length. Although *New Fun* contained a liberal mix of adventure and humor strips, none of these strips, until the third issue, were produced in color (and then only about half were in color–a common occurrence of early original comic books such as *New Fun, New Comics, Detective Picture Stories, Funny Picture Stories,* etc.). Additionally, the first four issues were only 32 pages long. Issues five and six were "expanded" to 40 pages. However, many of those pages were taken up with text pieces, puzzles and articles about various topics. Only the first three issues had "slick" covers, while the remaining covers were on uncoated paper stock.

Nonetheless, although lacking in page count and color, it was clear from the outset that something "New" was indeed underway. Right from the first issue the editor, through a character called "Fun the Fantastic," attempted to establish a dialogue with its readership. Reader reaction to the features was solicited. The letters were summarized at length in the magazines on a page called "Fun Mail." The results of favorite features were listed ("Don Drake of the Planet Saro," 2023 Super-Police" and "Sandra of the Secret Police"–two science fiction and an adventure strip rounded out the top three fan favorites as reported in the second issue. Certainly this poll reflected the genre of strips from where the early original comic books were to garner their strength). A fan club was formed called the "Fun Club." Club membership came with a "Fun Club" pinback (or button)–another first for a comic book.

The features were diverse and set the standard for anthology titles that were soon to abound in the marketplace. Spy thrillers were represented by "Sandra of the Secret Service" by Bringham, westerns by "Jack Woods" by Lyman Anderson, science fiction by "Don Drake on the Planet Saro" and "2023 Super-Police" by Clemens Gretter, sea-faring features by "In the Wake of the Wander" and "Mid-Shipman Dewey," an assortment of adventure and humor strips and horror/supernatural by "Dr. Occult, the Ghost Detective."

The adventure/science fiction stories were the most important benchmark of the title. These types of stories would form the foundation of original comic book material as other titles began to proliferate in the late 1930s. However, it is within the last issue of *New Fun* that the seed of a character is found that was to cause the comic book business to erupt into the lucrative industry it was to become in the 1940s. The sixth issue (October 1935) ran a strip called "Dr. Occult the Ghost Detective" by Legar and Reuths. This was a pen name for two young men from Cleveland, Ohio–Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster. (This pen name was used because Siegel and Shuster had contributed another strip in this sixth issue, "Henri Duval." It became common practice among comic companies to use aliases for individuals who contributed more than one strip per title so as to make it appear that their staff was large.) Dr. Occult, in one story arc, incorporated several elements that were the prototypal for "Superman." For this reason, the historical importance and value of *New Fun* #6 can not be overestimated. It is only recently that the *Overstreet Price Guide* has begun to recognize the relative value of this book compared to its sister issues of *New Fun*. It is only recently that collectors have realized the true rarity of this historical gem.

Dr. Occult in his first stories was kept busy fighting the Vampire Master. At this point the development of the character takes a short detour. Early in 1936, William Cook (National's managing editor and story contributor) and John Mahon (National's business manager) left National to form their own short-lived comic company, Comic Magazine Co. Their first title was The Comic Magazine. This title contained slight variations of continuing characters that were appearing in National's titles. It has been hypothesized that these inventory stories served as payment for monies Cook and Mahon were owed by the financially strapped National. Anyway, in the first issue of this title (May 1936), Dr. Occult became, "Dr. Mystic, the Occult Detective." (Note, in *More Fun* #11 (July 1936) he was "Dr. Occult, the Mystic Detective.") In this story, he joins up with the Seven to battle the evil of Koth. This feature did not continue in the second issue of *The Comic Magazine*. However, the story continued without missing a beat in the fourteenth issue of *More Fun* (October 1936). As the story continues, Dr. Occult is given a uniform with a triangular chest emblem and a red cape to fight Koth. After donning the uniform and cape, off he flies.... The elements of costume design were obviously influenced by the character which Siegel and Shuster had tried for years to get off the ground.

Many names that were soon to play dominant and not so dominant roles in the success of the comic book industry were associated with this title:

►**Lloyd Jacquet** was the editor of this title. After leaving National, Jacquet would form one of the key comic book shops of the 1930s and 1940s–Funnies, Inc. With artists such as Bill Everett and Carl Burgos, Funnies, Inc. would package material for several Golden Age companies such as Centaur Publications, Timely Publications (including *Marvel Comics* #1), etc.

►**Vincent Sullivan** contributed several humor strips for the title such as "Spike Spaulding" and "Charlie Fish." He was to be a prominent editor for DC in the 1930s and go on to be the editor for Columbia Publications and ME Comics. He was

PAGE 45: The cover of New Fun #1 (Feb 1935) the first DC comic book. FACING PAGE: the one-page duotone Dr. Occult story from New Fun #6 (Oct 1935). This was the first time Siegel & Shuster were ever published. ABOVE: The Big Book of Fun Comics (Sum 1935) reprinted selections from New Fun #1-4 and was sold only at F.W. Woolworth stores. FOLLOWING PAGE: Dr. Occult and "Koth & the Seven" from More Fun #14 (Oct 1936). The story is continued from The Comics Magazine #1.

the cover artist for one of the classic Golden Age covers of all time–*Detective Comics* #1.

► **Ken Fitch** wrote several text pieces for *New Fun*, as well as writing the science fiction strips in the title of "Don Drake" and "2023 Super Police." He was a prolific contributor to many Golden Age companies ranging from Chesler and Centaur to Fawcett and Holyoke.

► **Bert Whitman** contributed "Judge Perkins" under the name "Burt." He had a small comic shop in the early 1940s which produced *Whirlwind Comics, Crash Comics* and early issues of *Green Hornet Comics*.

DR. OCCULT
THE GHOST DETECTIVE
LEGER & REUTHS
FLYING THRU THE SUPER-NATURAL WORLD TO THE SEVEN, OCCULT AND ZATOR ARE ATTACKED BY THE BEASTS OF A BEING NAMED KOTH.
THE RAVENOUS MONSTERS OF THE OCCULT WORLD ARE DRIVEN BACK FROM THEIR PREY AS A GROUP OF AGED MEN MAJESTICALLY MATERIALIZE AND FORM A PROTECTIVE CIRCLE ABOUT OCCULT AND ZATOR
THE SEVEN! WE'RE SAVED!
NOT YET! KOTH IS SEEKING TO OVERPOWER THE SEVEN BY SUPER FORCE OF HIS MIND!
ONE MIND AGAINST SEVEN! KOTH HATEFULLY THROWS ALL HIS RESOURCES INTO PLAY. THE SEVEN BEGIN TO FADE...
OCCULT AND ZATOR ATTEMPT TO ASSIST THE SEVEN. THEY CONCENTRATE UPON THE RETREAT OF KOTH UNTIL THEIR VERY BRAINS ACHE
THE TIDE IS TURNED... KOTH VANISHES IN A BURST OF FLAME! VICTORY! -- THE MENTAL BATTLE IS WON!
OCCULT AND ZATOR RESUME THEIR FLIGHT. AT LAST THEY ALIGHT, MATERIALIZING IN THE HIDDEN REALM OF THE SEVEN
WHO IS KOTH?
AN INHUMAN CREATURE WITH A TERRIBLE HATRED FOR THE WORLD OF MAN. YOU HAVE ESCAPED HIS AWFUL WRATH IN THIS FIRST ENCOUNTER, BUT NEXT TIME YOU MAY NOT BE SO FORTUNATE

► **Whitney Ellsworth** contributed "Little Linda" starting with the second issue. He became a key editor for the early DC titles.

► **Leo O'Melia** took over the art chores, as of issue 4, on "Barry O'Neil" which was an adventure strip set in the far east. His towering draftsmanship made the strip a standout. Although overshadowed by the fame of "Superman," his early *Action Comics* covers are highly coveted by Golden Age fans.

► **Tom Cooper** contributed several strips. Although of no lasting notoriety, Cooper is credited with the first "complete short story" appearing in comics. This was the seven page thriller, "The Golden Idol," which appeared in *Comic Magazine* #2 (June 1936). (But compare early "Radio Squad" four page stories in *New Comics*.)

► **Walter Lantz** produced "Oswald the Rabbit," forerunner of his many funny animal creations such as "Woody Woodpecker."

► **Henry Kiefer** drew "Wing Brady." Kiefer produced material for many Golden Age companies through his association with the Chesler Shop and Iger Shop. He drew many esoteric features, such as "Dr. Nerod" for *Green Giant Comics*, "Liberty Lads" for *Champion Comics* and mainstream stories for *Classics Illustrated*.

► **Jack Warren**, who drew the humorous western strip "Loco Luke," continued in this vein by drawing a variety of humor and humorous western strips for Novelty Publications, Hillman and others.

Although by Modern Age standards–and even Golden Age standards–many of the features were hum-drum, the importance of this title to the whole comic book industry cannot be stressed enough. By December 1935, National added *New Comics* which was of standard size. The following month *New Fun* changed its name and size to more effectively compete in the comic book marketplace. Other publishers, such as the Comic Magazine Company and Henle Publications (*Wow! What a Magazine*), featuring original material, soon joined these two titles on the newsstand. The seeds sown by *New Fun* were slowly growing–soon they would be in full bloom. However, as with any concept/creation that becomes taken for granted, there always has to be a first step, and that first step for the comic book industry is represented by the six groundbreaking issues of *New Fun*. ■

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Each book from this Magnificent collection was purchased from a small drug store in Rockford Illinois between the years 1938 - 1950. Hence the name - **The Rockford Collection**.

The collection contains nearly 2000 Golden age comic books, including deep runs of some very popular titles, such as **Detective, Action, Bat Man, Superman, Adventure, World's Finest, All Star, More Fun, Military, Wow, Daredevil, Master, Captain Marvel, National, Police, Planet, Jungle, Jumbo**, **Wings**, and **many more**!

The owner of this collection was a true collector, who loved reading his comics and had aspirations of becoming a comic book artist himself one day. He was very meticulous in the storage and care of his books, making sure that they were covered, kept dry, evenly stacked, and even alternated the spines to avoid spine rolls. Because of this extraordinary care, the overall quality of this collection is exceptionally nice, making this one of the **highest quality collections ever to surface**. While there are several hundred books in the **GD** to **VG/FN** range, there are also several hundred in the **FN** range, and almost **1000** in the **VF to NM range! Incredible!**

PEDIGREE STATUS? After discussing this issue at length with Bob Overstreet, Gary Carter, Jon Berk, and many other knowledgeable experts, it was explained to me that Pedigree status is determined by size of the collection, condition, and depth, but most importantly - the Market acceptance. Based on a small sampling of books I brought with me to the San Diego Comic Convention, this is definitely a very special collection! The books sold very fast (at above Guide prices) - **to dealers** - who then resold them at even higher prices.

This collection is twice as large as the **Larson** collection and contains far more high grade books. It dwarfs the **Allentown, San Francisco, Pennsylvania, Denver, Cosmic Aeroplane, and Comstock** collections. Only the gigantic **Edgar Church** "Mile High" collection can boast more high grade books than the **Rockford** collection.

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GEORGE EVANS INTERVIEW

Continued from page 25

Bernie Krigstein... the cramped with copy stuff drove him nuts! He would take a razor blade and cut up the copy and rearrange it on a separate board. It worked for Bernie... but it really was a killer workload to do it that way.

ANDY: What kind of a place was EC to work? Did you feel like part of the family?

EVANS: It was a very good place. Fawcett was a very good place, too. There were no stuffed shirts there. And at EC, there were certainly no stuffed shirts! When Al Williamson had taken me in, and we had the discussion about money, 35 bucks was considered the top rate. They were going to start me at two and a half bucks less. I said, "Well, I'm making the top rate at Fawcett, I'll stay with them." Bill Gaines said, "They're going under." I said, "I'll stay 'til they go under." Bill said, "Ah, what the hell, we'll pay you the same amount."

So, they gave me the script and I went up to Fawcett's and talked to the people I worked with there and they said, "It's true. We're going under and you would be wise to accept it."

Any one of them could have transferred from Fawcett to EC and they would have been at home. It was the same bit. No smart alecs, no stuffed shirts. It was like walking into family. You'd walk in there and say, "Hi Bill!" and here was this guy who was obviously loaded and has his own ideas about the way things should go, but it was right down there on the level that you're—one of the group, we can talk—Bill to George, Bill to Al, or whatever.

ANDY: So the EC office wasn't very political?

EVANS: Nothing of the sort. It was a bunch of people who really liked what they were doing and enjoyed the hell out of it and worked very well together to achieve what we did.

ANDY: Did it feel like there was something special going on?

EVANS: There was a spirit of competition to a degree, I guess. I think maybe we worked a little too hard for our own good. We all worked like crazy in black and white to achieve the effects we wanted. I guess, in a sense, that cramped Marie Severin's style, because as a colorist she was able to do the same (give an eerie effect) with color. Remember some of the things that she did? I guess she colored Graham Ingles' covers. They were masterpieces. The use of color and shadow—all the rest of it.

CLASSIC GEORGE EVANS PANE. FROM "I-8+" FRONTLINE COMBAT #13 (MAY-JUN 1953)

ANDY: When did you join the EC bullpen?

EVANS: Pretty well down the line... they had been publishing awhile. The big money that had come in, Bill took them on trips. I know one of the trips was to New Orleans, or something like that. Each year there was a trip and Bill paid large bonuses. Graham Ingles and I were pretty friendly. I would go up to visit him... he lived on Long Island, *(Continued on page 53)*

AL FELDSTEIN

Continued from page 24

"I had a wife and kids in this little apartment in Brooklyn. I would do anything to make a buck so we could buy a home. When I conned Victor Fox into believing I was a writer, I really wasn't. I figured if I could do a whole package it would mean a better income. I became a writer, but I had never considered myself a writer."

More writing followed for Feldstein and an encounter with a young science fiction writer would influence that writing. Says Feldstein, "One time, when Bill and I were creating plots, he gave me two springboards and I combined them into a story. I didn't know that they were Ray Bradbury stories. Bill would give me these springboards from what he was reading. Then we would change them. I combined two of these ideas that he had and I thought I changed them and I thought the springboard was original. Anyway we got a letter from Ray Bradbury that said, "Hey you guys, you have neglected to pay me royalties, etc.' Bill Gaines wrote back and said, "Oh gosh we certainly were trying to get in touch with you, and we paid him."

Feldstein continues, "Then we asked him if he would let us adapt some of his other stories into comics. On his stuff, I wasn't working from springboards. I was working from the actual stories themselves. I had great respect for his writing, so I tried to capture as much of the quality of his writing as I could. Considering that comics were a rather brief reading experience, I started getting a little heavy with the captions. That became the signature of EC comics, that there was a lot of text. Some of the artists used to complain that they would have to draw hunched back characters under the balloons, because there wasn't enough space. After I started to adapt Bradbury's stuff into the comics, I really got interested in writing."

Feldstein would take artists' Bristol board into a room, and write the text of his stories on the board itself, giving the letterer a bit of room at the top to copy the text. Feldstein became a master at pacing the story to the precise number of pages for the assignment. Says Feldstein, "I wrote everything directly on the board. The only downside of that was that I was actually doing the layout. The artist had no say in how big a panel would be or how small a panel would be. I had a tendency to do rather regular panels. I stopped doing some of those crazy things that many of the comic books were doing with circles and elongated panels. They were confusing. They were dedications to artwork, although I didn't think they necessarily told the story well."

As sales swelled, EC began to develop a stable of artists. "The artists came to us because they had heard that Bill Gaines paid you on the day that you finished a job. Since I had been a free lance artist and a writer, two of the things I pushed for was that artists should have their jobs paid for when they brought it in and have another one ready for them. Because, what I used to do in my free lance days, was finish the story and bring it in to the publisher. He'd say, "Thanks, I'll send you a check." Then I'd stand there with egg on my face and say, "Uh-oh. Now, I have to go find another job." I not only carried the job back, but I started carrying my portfolio. It was not a very secure kind of profession. I was very aware of that and had great feeling for the plight of the free lancer. That also ensured us that they would be with us and not have to work for anybody else. As we developed our magazines, our stories, and the stories that went with the style of each artist."

FOUR-EYED ALIENS whiz through outer space with their captured human specimens on Al Feldstein's cover to Weird Fantasy #8 (Jul/Aug 1951).

Feldstein encouraged his artists to develop a style of their own, "Jack Davis, when I hired him, he came up from Atlanta. He was a young Southern kid and he was very talented. He had a very special style. He asked me how I wanted him to draw and I said, "I want you to draw your style!' That's the thing that I also encouraged, that everyone had their own style and that was their signature and that's the way they should draw, not try to imitate Wood, or Kirby."

Feldstein describes the camaraderie that developed at EC, "The artists would appreciate and respect what each one was doing and try harder. It became a kind of competition to them to impress each other. When there were times when two or three artists would come in at one time, it was great fun, too. Each would look at each other's art and they would 'ohhhhhh' and 'ahhhhhh.' So, it became a kind of a family of competitive brothers as it were. It was great and we felt it too. We started to have Christmas parties and invite everybody. Everybody got to know each other better and their wives. Bill would give out little bonuses and presents. It was a happy family. We were all feeling part of creating a new kind of thing."

As the company grew, so did the camaraderie. "I loved working there because I was doing what I loved to do. Bill and I were great friends and all the artists were great friends, and we were putting out that we thought was good stuff and entertaining stuff. And, it was easy. Sure you had to have the talent for it as far as the art was concerned, and I guess you had to have the talent for it as far as the writing was concerned. It was a great place for creative energy. It was work and play at the same time. We had lots of play."

Feldstein relates some examples of the horseplay around the office, "Bill created a "twin" brother for example, and he hounded one of our stock room boys with this nasty "twin" brother. This "twin" brother had this scar that ran from his ear across his mouth. Johnny Craig and I used to fix him up with that with rubber cement. The Christmas parties had all sorts of satirical themes to them. One year I did the extension of our publication line into other titles, and I had these titles and covers pinned around the walls. Johnny Craig helped because we both worked at the office. We were able to stay late and do stuff like that as Christmas approached."

Feldstein continues, "Bill Gaines had a huge desk that was his father's. It had a slide out board above one of the drawers which was used for a typewriter. He had a sales chart tacked to it. He'd come in in the morning and check out his sales chart. Johnny Craig and I started a pornographic continuity that we would tack over the sales charts. So, when he came in and opened up that board, there would be this next episode of whatever it was called. We'd do one panel with the day's gag... it was filthy! But, it was fun!"

After the success of the horror titles, Gaines gave Feldstein some science fiction pulps to read, including *Astounding Science Fiction*. This would launch EC's two science fiction titles. "They didn't do as well as the horror comics, but they were the love of our lives because we really got into a lot of

things that were close to our hearts, especially my heart. I was a liberal and a socially conscious person. Here was a chance to do some preachy stories, where we did allegories and such."

EC LEGEND
Al Feldstein signing for fans at the 1996 DragonCon in Atlanta, GA.

These sci-fi titles led to a run-in with a Comics Code judge. Feldstein reminisces "It was a story about a planet where the human race there had died out. What was left were robots. They were developing a society. There were blue robots and orange robots. They get visited by a galactic examiner, because they had asked to join the galactic empire, which was a democratic empire. His determination was that they weren't ready to join the democracy because there was intolerance between the orange and blue robots. The last panel showed that the examiner was a black man. It showed that he had reached a rather high level in his democracy. For its time, it was the fifties, it was pretty advanced, liberal talk. Judge Murphy, a Comics Code czar, said, "No, you can't have a black man." And I said, "Well, that's the whole point of the story."

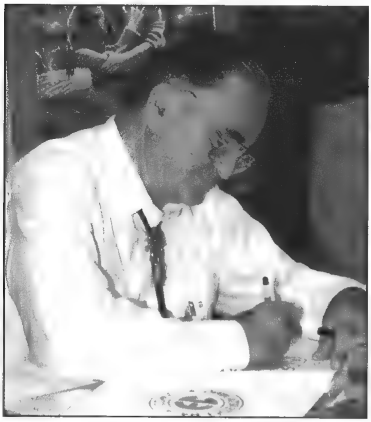


PHOTO: DIED T. JOHN... COVER 11

"I went back to Bill and told them that the Comics Code was just impossible to work with. So, Bill called them up and Murphy said, 'You can't have a black man.' And Bill said, 'Okay, I'm going to have a press conference and show them just how prejudiced you are!' and Judge Murphy let us use a black man."

Feldstein adds, "I liked the science fiction stories. I really got into them. There were more imaginative areas to enter into. It was unlimited.

Horror is limited to blood and gore and walking corpses, vampires, ghouls, etc. It had kind of a limitation. In science fiction, whatever you could dream up that would be scientifically possible or sound like pseudo-science would work."

But it was a horror story that would leave an indelible mark on comics. A story called "Foul Play," in which a baseball player murders a rival team's player. The rival team gets revenge by playing a midnight game in which the murderer's body parts are the bases and equipment used in the game. Says Feldstein, "Foul Play was a regrettable error. I was writing four stories a week, editing on the fifth day, and I was trying to do a cover once in awhile. Some times in an effort to get the stories done, you lower your standards a bit. That story was just too much. It was kind of a wild idea of retribution or poetic justice, but it wasn't very poetic. It was just something that we shouldn't have done, but we did it because we were being pushed by schedules."

The reaction to 'Foul Play' lead to public outcry against the horror comics. Says Feldstein, "People didn't overreact to Foul Play, the committee did. The problem here, was that once media and once authority comes down on something, most people follow like lemmings. It was during these hearings that Bill was maligned and we were turned into ogres and terrible people. It was a very sad time in our country. It wasn't just the welfare of our children that was at stake here, it was the freedom of the press. There were factions that would like to get their foot in the door. There were some laws passed that were absolutely unconstitutional and have never been adjudicated or enforced. This was the same era as Joe McCarthy."

Feldstein continues, "Everybody started to be pushed around by these committees. Even the artists started to feel guilty about what they had done. Jack Davis got very, very embarrassed that he had done Foul Play and some of the other stories. He was then living in Scarsdale, doing fairly well, had children. His neighbors were saying, "You're a comic book artist? You do that stuff?!"

Feldstein points out that the horror movies have since far exceeded anything he and Gaines could have come up with in the comics. "At one point, EC was actually inducted into the Horror Hall Of Fame on television. Bill Gaines went to this dinner and he felt that this was certainly a vindication of what he had done. The movie people were putting out stuff that was many times worse than whatever we did. *Friday the Thirteenth*, with axes right into heads and spilling blood and gore, hey, that stuff is visual. You know a drawing is a drawing, but a film is a step closer to reality."

After the end of EC comics, Feldstein had a successful career at *MAD* magazine. Feldstein retired to Wyoming and rediscovered an old love... painting.

Feldstein had a passion for photography and dreamed of retiring and painting photo-realistic paintings from his photographs. "I decided to retire. There were problems between Bill and me and that had developed way back at the end of EC. I decided *MAD* was not going to go anywhere the way Bill was running it, and I set my sights on retiring. I refused to sign the usual contract that he had me on, the one that made me rather well off, because it was a participation contract in the sales of *MAD*. I decided to only sign a three-year contract and when that was up, I did retire. Unfortunately, the last year of the contract, my second wife developed lung cancer. Bill just thought I wanted a three-year contract so that I could re-negotiate it sooner. But, I wanted a three-year contract so that I couldn't be held in any longer than that. He thought I retired because I wanted to be with my second wife, *(Continued on page 54)*

GEORGE EVANS

Continued from page 50

too. He had bought himself a boat and an outboard motor with a bonus he got. When I got there, the animosity toward horror comics had cut into them somewhat. They'd had some trouble, the way Bill told it, with getting proper distribution. I didn't get in on the early gravy train when I got there. It was still going well, but you got paid just what you earned by then.

ANDY: In terms of EC's heyday, when did you get there?

EVANS: It ended about 1955, if I'm not mistaken. So, I was probably there within four or five years of the end.

ANDY: Did you get a chance to do some science fiction?

EVANS: I did one story totally on my own... Al Williamson and I worked together on it. The one I did was like the movie with Raquel Welch, Fantastic Voyage. The story I did was more or less the same. I think it came out before the Fantastic Voyage movie. Whether Al Feldstein borrowed the plot from somebody or Hollywood borrowed the plot from Al, I don't know. In my story, there were these small people in a vast jungle like area, but all the trunks of the trees were standing up straight, or gracefully curved. It turned out that they were doing head surgery, and the trees were human hair.

ANDY: So, you were on the cutting-edge there?

EVANS: Oh you made a pun there! The story I worked on with Al Williamson was a space opus, rocket ships and the like. I don't remember the plot, really.

ANDY: What was your favorite genre? Was it the war stories?

EVANS: I enjoyed it all! I really did. You can't imagine all the crap we took from Kefauver and the Senate Hearings on comic books... and all the guilt trips they loaded on us. I never bought one iota of it! The Kefauver folks were throwing around that our comics supposedly inspired some kid in Philadelphia to murder a schoolmate. My wife was from Philadelphia. I went there regularly. I knew the inside story of that incident. It turned out that the kid, who did the murders and had that huge pile of comic books, was almost illiterate. He was like Moe, the real bully, in Calvin and Hobbes. If somebody had something, just to show he was the big guy, he took it. That's how he accumulated that huge store of comic books. They were probably unread!

Senator Estes Kefauver actually was desperately hopeful of becoming president. I think he thought he could kick him self up into TV and radio as a big man. And there was also Dr. Fredric Wertham and *Seduction of the Innocent*.

ANDY: Aces High. Was that after Kefauver? What about EC's new direction?

EVANS: Well, that's an interesting story in itself. Bill was dragged into the Senate hearings... he had hired a pretty reputable team of lawyers from Chicago. In truth, he actually won the case, he established that we had the right to publish, that our stories were not causing kids to become criminals, and in fact his lawyers made Dr. Wertham look like some kind of a fool.

But, in the end... when it was over... even though Bill had won his case, he called us all together and he said, "They say I'm hurting kids, and I don't want to hurt kids. So, we're going to change to a new direction."

That's when they began the Aces High, Piracy, and strict adventure stories. That's when they brought in these outside writers like Jack Oliick and Carl Westler. Al Feldstein was sort of a supervisor then, Al wrote most of the stuff for the Psychoanalysis title. They actually tried out a television series called The Psychiatrist. Howard Rodman took the name credit, but my understanding is that Al Feldstein actually produced the scripts. They were well written scripts and I could hear and see Al Feldstein's hand in it. The credits said script by Howard Rodman and Editorial Assistant, Al Feldstein. Al got a name credit, but not full credit for what he did. That's life, huh?

ANDY: What made EC stand out to you, both as a comic book company and as a part of your career?

EVANS: They were very successful comic books and they dominated each field. . science fiction, horror, shock-suspense. The scripts were intelligent, that people (who were not hooked on superheroes) could enjoy. They didn't write down to readers. They were based on the premise that the people who were buying and reading EC comics had some kind of brain in their heads. The mail we got proved it.

All th's stuff about the damage we were doing *(Continued on page 54)*

GOSH, GRAMPS! THINGS SURE WERE DIFFERENT IN YOUR WAR!
WAR IS ALWAYS THE SAME, MY BOY. IT BRINGS DEATH AND DESTRUCTION AND MISERY NO MATTER WHERE, WHEN, OR HOW IT IS FOUGHT.

ANTI-WAR SENTIMENT contained in many EC war titles was a much different message than the usual combat-related fare published by other comic book companies. This Evans panel perfectly illustrates EC's novel early 1950's anti-war message.

which was kind of dumb of him to think so, because if I had a wife with terminal cancer, why would I want to quit one of the highest paying editorial jobs in the world, if my wife was going to be gone, what would I be doing with myself? He didn't really figure it out. Anyway I retired, one because I wanted to be with her, and two because I didn't want to be at *MAD* anymore, the way it was being run and the way it was going. I had lots of other ideas."

WORLD WAR I BIPLANES was George Evans' forté in **Frontline Combat, Two-Fisted Tales, and Aces High.**

After the death of his second wife, Feldstein received an easel from one of his children and began painting again. "I think I did my last painting in 1947 and I retired in 1984. I hadn't painted in all that time. I hadn't done any artwork to speak of over those years because I just didn't have any desire to do artwork over the weekend when I was expending all this creative energy during the week. That was fine with me. It was fun, when I went back to painting it was like I hadn't left it. In fact, I had kind of improved. You have to understand that from EC comics I went into my whole *MAD* career. In the *MAD* career, I was working more with illustrators and guys like Norman Mingo, who were doing the covers. I was kind of absorbing the creativity that they were expending."

FELDSTEIN'S CRYPT KEEPER as well as an assortment of decaying and often ambulatory corpses appeared regularly in the pages of **Crypt Of Terror** and the early issues of **Tales From The Crypt.**

Feldstein remarried and retired first to Wyoming, where he painted landscapes and then moved on to Montana and a new subject for his art. "When I got here, I suddenly became emersed in the ranching community and the cowboys that still worked the ranches. I decided, "God, this is a wonderful disappearing scene and I wanted to paint these guys. That's what I've been doing lately. I've devoted two years to painting these western cowboys."

Feldstein has had three paintings accepted into the Arts For Parks competition, a prestigious competition for fine arts painters with National Park's themes. Feldstein's work is sold in art galleries and is also available for viewing on his website. Additionally Feldstein paints commissioned reproductions of his EC work. Feldstein's work can be seen on the web at: http://www.mcn.net/~afeldstein.

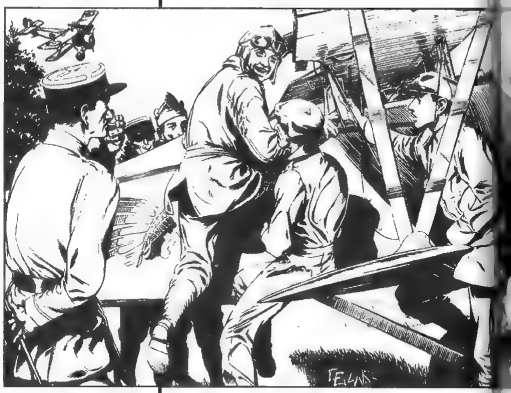
Feldstein jokes, "Tell the collectors to visit the site right quick, because I'm 72 and I'm fading fast." ■

Andy Lee is a Boston based freelance writer and electrical engineer by day. A regular contributor to Gemstone Publishing, Andy has been a comic collector for 25 years.

GEORGE EVANS

Continued from page 53

was nonsense. They would lay out letters for us to read and it became a kind of a game. One constantly was saying, "Well, it was a good story, but



if you'd had the ending do this it would have been better." So, then Al would sit down and rewrite the story with the ending the guy had suggested and add a twist. That's the sort of audience that became the EC audience.

Even, today, when you read EC, it's not written for nitwits or boobs. Everybody at EC, knowing that this was stuff was a little better than the run of the mill stuff, worked a little harder and tried to capture what Al Feldstein was writing about.

They also bought the rights to adapt a lot of Ray Bradbury's stuff and it was darn good! They also bought the rights to do a couple of Civil War stories from famous writers of historical mater ia under Harvey Kurtzman. Anybody who wanted something other than the in-your-face nitwit stuff turned to EC and found there was that extra added something there.

When Fawcett went under and I lost those friends up there and they scattered to different places, I stepped into another family... EC. To the day Bill died, he was a friend. He would

come up this way occasionally because one of his daughters lived up this way. He would always call and if we weren't tied up or had something planned, he would invite us out and we'd have a great time.

Of course, they invited me and everyone to the anniversary get together they had, but I wasn't up to it. I'd had open-heart surgery, so I had to skip it and I regret it. But to the very last I regarded Bill as a dear friend, as well as the man I worked for.

I don't know if your readers know it, but I feel that Bill set up something that Neal Adams eventually got established throughout the comics field... that your reprints get royalties. Bill did that on his own. He set up a deal that to this day, with everything that involves EC, the money is divided up on a scale. We each get something usually around Christmas time each year. It's an enduring royalty system from the 1950s to this day. His daughter and his wife still maintain it and are a part of this long-lasting bonus system. That was out of his own heart. By God, you've got to give a guy credit for that!

ANDY: Getting back to Aces High, what made the title so important to you?

EVANS: Well, long before I was in the Air Force in World War II, for whatever reason, I got hooked on planes. Maybe it was because I was seven when Lindbergh flew the Atlantic. He was the hero of the day. I got hooked on World War I airplanes, and the men who flew those planes. It's still my enduring and favorite hobby and I'm still deep into it.

When Harvey K. got into his War books, he had John Severin draw the Red Baron, Richtofen. One afternoon Bill took a whole bunch of us out to have something to eat. In discussion at the table it was revealed that Bill Gaines was in the Air Force (on a rescue team) and that I was an aircraft mechanic.

Harvey said to me, "You're interested in airplanes? Did you see the one we did about the Red Baron?" I said, "Yeah." He detected something in the way I said it. He said, "You didn't like it?" I said, "What's not to like?" He said, "You sound skeptical. How about John Severin's artwork?" I said, "It was great. But, with the Red Baron's airplane, he didn't have the motor going around."

That particular motor was called a rotary and it went around with the propeller. Harvey looked at me buggy-eyed and he said, "It went around?" He was sure I was putting him on.

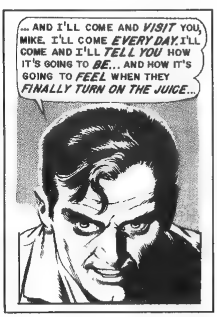
Anyway, I explained the principle of it to him and he asked if I would do some of the stuff John and I shared the book... Jack Davis too. When they found out I was a nut for that sort of thing, I did a lot of work on the war books

Actually, it was about that time that things started to fall off. Bill was trying to keep us all employed until we could find something else. That too, was out of his heart. I don't think he expected to make any great amount of money from the new direction titles. The Aces High was his bow to me. But I really enjoyed all the planes.

The stories, of course, were lifted, or what we call "updated," from the old pulp magazines. Every plot I worked on I recognized. I enjoyed working on them. It sure looked like Jack Davis did, because his stuff was just swoop-and-go! He drew the airplanes as dynamically as anybody.

ANDY: I've read that you were often totally absorbed in (and distracted by) the research... because it was a topic you were so interested in.

EVANS: I did that with everything I ever did. I could be rich if that wasn't one of my faults (laughter). When I worked for Classics Illustrated, I would get hooked into those too. They explored all kinds of historical stuff. I was doing as much reading and studying as I was doing actual work. I had a pretty good library on the WWI aviation stuff. That was actually the easiest research. In subsequent years, I found out that some of the so-called authorities who wrote for the pulps were writing fiction and calling it fact. Such is life.


... AND I'LL COME AND VISIT YOU, MIKE. I'LL COME EVERY DAY. I'LL COME AND I'LL TELL YOU HOW IT'S GOING TO BE... AND HOW IT'S GOING TO FEEL WHEN THEY FINALLY TURN ON THE JUICE...

ANDY: Can you tell your fans what you're doing these days?

EVANS: My eyes aren't what they were and my hand is not as steady as it was. Until last year, Al Williamson, the guy who kept getting me jobs, turned over the Secret Agent Corrigan strip to me. It wasn't making a great deal of money, but I enjoyed the heck out of doing it. I wrote and illustrated it. Until last February I was doing it. Since then, I do a little bit of this, a little bit of that... as it's offered. We thoughtfully put away a dollar or two and I can pretty much do as I please. If you're passionate about something, have something that you're really into, you don't ever really retire.

My wife laments that we never did much in the way of vacations. I said, "Good God! My whole working life has been a vacation!" Dik Browne did Hägar the Horrible until he died. Somebody said to him, "What do you think Heaven will be like?" He knew he was dying. He said, "If I get to those Pearly Gates and they take me through and say your drawing board is over here in this corner, Dick, and I find a lot of other cartoonists around, I'm going to be in Heaven."

ANDY: Do you have a message for your fans?

EVANS: I hope they know I always did my best. Even in the *Classics Illustrated* days (with those very low rates), Reed Crandall and I (working together on a lot of stuff) did our best. If it required research, we did it.

In everything I did, both working with others and solo, I did my damndest to give the fans the best interpretation I could give and the most enjoyment that I could provide for them. In doing that, I enjoyed it just as much as they did. So, to those fans: Hi guys! We're all one tribe! ■

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TANGLED ROOTS

(Continued from page 29)

Magazines, Inc., out of an office at 60 Murray Street, soon relocating to 125 East 46th Street. They planned four titles, *Super-Detective Stories, Super-Love Stories, SuperMystery Stories* and *Super-Western Stories. Super-Detective Stories* debuted in March, 1934. *Super-Love Stories* came out in the Fall, but published only a handful of issues. The other two titles never got off the ground.

Super Magazines was yet another tentacle of the growing Donenfeld octopus. It was incorporated December 19, 1993 by Harry and Irving Donenfeld, and Herbert M. Siegel. Armer had found himself working for his erstwhile competitor and cover printer! Since this was the Depression, he was probably lucky to find a publishing berth.

Super-Detective was a typical detective pulp. Other than a few contributions from Erle Stanley Gardner, Conan creator Robert E. Howard, and other writers, including future Superman editor Mort Weisinger (as Tom Erwin Geris and James P. Olsen), who would later become important to the Donenfeld pulp line, little of note appeared within its pages. But the *Super-Detective* logo is of interest. It was drawn in a stylized three-dimensional block lettering that anticipates a more angular version of the famous *Superman* comic logo. Inasmuch as the character of Superman had been created a year earlier by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster and not yet marketed, there would seem to be no direct connection between the two—unless by a bizarre coincidence, they copied the *Super-Detective* logo for their own. The original pre-costume Superman cover reproduced in *Comic Book Marketplace* #36 shows lettering very similar to the *Super Detective Stories* logo.

Super-Detective lasted fourteen issues, little more than a year. Near the end it converted to bedsheet size on slicker paper. Presumably poor sales put it to rest—temporarily—with the July, 1935 issue. By that time Frank Armer and Harry Donenfeld were overseeing the beginnings of a revolution in the pulp magazine industry—one that would have far-reaching effects, not only on the pulp field, but on the yet uncreated comic book market.

It began early in 1934. when, under the Modern Magazines imprint, Donenfeld and Armer released an unusual title, cover-dated May. The magazine was called *Spicy Detective Stories*.

Spicy Detective Stories was like nothing that had ever appeared on the nation's newsstands before. Outwardly a pulp magazine, it featured gobs of the kind of racy art and suggestive prose that had formally been the province of the likes of *Spicy Stories* in tales like "Red-Headed Corpse," "Passion Killer" and "Flesh Magnet."

As Frank Armer once explained to a prospective contributor:

> ... while the stories are basically detective stories of the thrilling, sensational type, they must have a very strong sex element similar to those found in the various risqué magazines that are published; that is, there must be heavy petting sequences and provocative descriptions of the beautiful girls that get into all the trouble as a result of the crimes in the plot.

What the two men had done was deceptively simple: They introduced sex into a detective pulp. But in a larger sense, they had begun to break down the barriers that had separated the sex pulps from the genre pulps. Sensing they were on to something, they hastily assembled ashcan issues of several companion magazines, all dated July, 1934. The magazines were *Spicy Mystery Stories*

and *Spicy-Adventure Stories* (the hyphen was evidently so they didn't get into legal hot water with the publishers of the prestigious *Adventure* magazine.) Just to make sure, they also produced ashcans of *Snappy Adventure, Mystery* and *Detective* at the same time—all of which were copyrighted by a Trojan Publishing Corp. But none of these #1 issues ever reached the public. They were created for copyright purposes. When the second issues finally came out, they were dated May, 1935 and the owners of record were Culture Publications of Wilmington, Delaware. But the indicia listed their distributor as the Independent News Company of 480 Lexington Avenue. Independent was the distribution company that Donenfeld formed in 1932, in partnership with Jack Liebowitz. Independent News was National's distribution arm.

Why Donenfeld waited so long to release the other *Spicys* was a mystery. But the answer may have had to do with Donenfeld's run-in with the New York Licensing Commission in March of 1934. The trigger was an attempt by the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, under the aegis of John S. Sumner, to get the girlie and art magazines kicked off the newsstands of Manhattan.

As reported in the New York Times, Harry Donenfeld and his lawyer were forced to file an injunction to prevent Licensing Commissioner Paul Moss—who had successfully barred the sale of several of Donenfeld's girlie magazines in New York City, including *La Paree, Gay Parisienne, Spicy Stories* and *Pep Stories* from enforcing his ban on newsstand sales. Moss had claimed these were "indecent."

While the injunction was being considered, the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice lodged obscenity complaints against Donenfeld and two news dealers in connection with the sale of these magazines.

The *New York Times* did not cover the outcome of the trial but Donenfeld and the others were evidently cleared, because he continued to publish with impunity. Long-time DC personnel, however, tell of an incident in which Donenfeld narrowly escaped a prison sentence. The story goes like this: It seems that during one of his experiments in testing the frontiers of public taste, Donenfeld allowed photographs showing full frontal female nudity to run in *Pep*. These photographs were judged an affront to public decency, and Donenfeld was certain to go to jail. However, he prevailed upon the *Pep* editor to take the blame instead, absolving Donenfeld completely. The editor ended up serving the jail term and upon his release, as arranged, he had a job for life. His name was Herbert M. Seigel, Donenfeld's Super Magazines partner.

After that, Donenfeld took certain precautions. Merwil became the D. M. Publishing Company

and changed its mailing address to Wilmington, Delaware. But the Wilmington address was merely a maildrop. *Writer's Digest* explained that the Donenfeld's magazines maintained the drop owing to "the prejudices of the metropolitan police." The actual editorial offices remained in New York. Mail sent to Wilmington was sometimes returned as "unclaimed." The initials D. M. are a mystery, but it's almost certain they stood for Donenfeld Magazines.

At the same time, *Spicy Detective Stories* became a Culture Publication, also out of Wilmington, and continued as before. In fact, *Spicy Detective Stories* sold like wildfire, a fact that was evident by year's end to the entire pulp industry, which didn't know how to react to the phenomenon—at first. Donenfeld may simply have been waiting to make sure the New York police were going to be lenient toward the new magazine before adding other *Spicy* titles. Or perhaps he simply wasn't ready to add companion titles and wanted to prevent other publishers from extending his innovation into other genres by lifting the generic and uncopyrightable "Spicy" and "Snappy" adjectives. In any case, he had cannily covered all the major pulp genres except one: the Westerns. It may never have occurred to him, or perhaps the Western was too pure and seemingly incorruptible, and the thought of publishing a *Spicy Western* or a *Snappy Western Stories* was too ludicrous to contemplate. At that time, at least.

The address for *Spicy Detective* was listed as 900 Market Street in Wilmington, Delaware. In actual practice, manuscripts were shipped from Wilmington to the magazine's true editorial address—125 East 46th Street in New York City, which was also the office of Donenfeld and Armer's newest publishing venture.

In the same year that Donenfeld and Armer started the *Spicy* line, they started a separate arm of Culture called, with possibly the same euphemistic humor, Trojan Publishing. This was in partnership with a mysterious third party named Leo Greenwald. The first Trojan magazine seems to have been one of the planned Super Magazines quartet, *Super-Love Stories*. Some of the final issues of *Super-Detective Stories* were also published under this imprint. Why they abandoned the Super Magazines company name is an intriguing mystery that may never be solved. But it's very clear why *Super-Detective* and the other abortive *Super* titles were killed. Their sales could not hold a candle to the red-hot *Spicy*s.

Interestingly, contributors to the Culture line were answered on Trojan stationery, indicating that Culture was probably no more than a combination shell company and maildrop. It was not until 1937 that the first successful magazine carrying a Trojan copyright premiered, and when it did it was simply a variation of *Spicy Detective* called *Private Detective Stories*.

The *Spicy*s, as they were called, took the pulp industry by storm. At first scorned by other publishers, Culture's emphasis on hard-boiled violence, soft-boiled sex and lush artwork similar to their sex pamphlets was embraced by other publishers to varying degrees. Although not every pulp deigned to acknowledge that the public had a yen for spicy genre fiction, many did. Even *The Shadow*, which for many years did not feature female characters even in minor roles, went through a "Spicy" phase in the late '30s.

The *Spicy* formula was simple. The stories were very short, no more than 5,000 words, and although no overt sex transpired, the buildup and aftermath were dwelt upon in heated detail — including lots of description of "semi-nude" women running around, and falling into sexually perilous situations. The *Spicy* formula borrowed from the hard-boiled stories by Dashiell Hammett and Carroll John Daly, then appearing in *Black Mask* magazine, but they took the realism a step further into a single-minded fascination with the female body.

Wanted: Girls... Dead or Alive

By modern standards, the stuff may seem tame. The sexiest the art ever got was to depict bare-bosomed lasses with tiny pin-point nipples. Whenever the foreplay got serious, the text trailed off into suggestive ellipses. However, during the first year or two, the *Spicy*s showed an unhealthy preoccupation with glassy-eyed female corpses. Apparently frustrated at being unable to carry the sexual impulse to its obvious climax, the writers and artists took a distinctly sadistic approach.

Guidelines sent to writers circa 1934 made a bizarre distinction between what was within the bounds of *Spicy* propriety and what was not:

> "Whenever possible, avoid complete nudity of the female characters. You can have a girl strip down to her underwear or transparent negligee or

Familiarity Breeds Contempt

From the start, the DC empire seemed to give birth to its own competition.

The first to jump ship was Bill Cook, who left to edit his own title, *The Comics Magazine*, in 1936. This explains why some *New Fun* features appeared in early issues of *The Comics Magazine* with the titles altered. They were part of the severance deal with Wheeler-Nicholson.

Lloyd Jacquet was another Wheeler-Nicholson editor who left to start his own shop. It furnished the contents to the earliest of Martin Goodman's Timely titles.

Victor Fox was Donenfeld's accountant during the formative days of Superman. When he saw its secret sales figures, he quit and started Fox Comics in the same building, 480 Lexington Avenue! When Fox launched Wonderman, Donenfeld sued the character out of existence.

And the Action Comics editor who purchased Superman, Vincent Sullivan, soon left to work for *Big Shot Comics*. Later, he founded M. E. Enterprises, another significant comic book company.

The Small World of Distribution

Part I

The Independent News Company was created in 1932 to fill a vacuum created by the demise of Eastern Distributions in October 1931. Eastern was operated by Paul Sampliner and Charles Dreyfus. Its collapse stuck Harry Donenfeld and his brother, Irwin, with serious distribution problems and debts of over $27,000, nearly ruining them.

Determined never again to be at the mercy of another distribution outfit, which Donenfeld and Jack Liebowitz teamed up with Sampliner to form Independent News, later known as Warner Publisher Services, DC's distribution arm for over 50 years.

Two important future comics publishers were left jobless after the Eastern collapse. They were Martin Goodman and Louis Silberkleit, later to launch a pulp chain of their own in 1934, then going their separate ways. Goodman of course ultimately founded the Timely/Atlas/Marvel comics empire. Louis Silberkleit was the I in MLJ Comics, now known as the Archie Group. A third Eastern partner, Arthur Bernhard, launched *Silver Streak Comics* in 1939 under the Comic House Publications name. (*Marvel Mystery Comics* #2 featured an ad for *Silver Streak* #1.)

nightgown, or the thin torn shred of her garments, but while the girl is alive and in contact with a man, we do not want complete nudity.

A female corpse is allowable, of course.

Scenes of half nude female victims being strangled, stabbed or beaten were illustrated with relish. Although the artwork, like those of the sex pamphlets, is recognizably the forerunner of what collectors today call "Good Girl Art," the *Spicys* had a distressing habit of pandering to sadistic impulses. The early issues were filled with what could be described as "Dead Girl Art" featuring many examples of the "knife-in-breast" motif. But these were the excesses of early success. By 1936, the nipples and daggers had disappeared—probably victims of blue-nosed censors. Or an intelligent editor.

Spicy Scribes

The star writer of the *Spicys* and the man who set the pace for its fiction was a bespectacled young scribe named Robert Leslie Bellem. Bellem, a past contributor to Donenfeld's sex magazines, created the notorious Hollywood gumshoe named Dan Turner in the June, 1934 *Spicy Detective*. Turner, who would careen through various Culture and Trojan magazines for as long as they were being published, was a breezy, wisecracking private dick who worked for assorted Hollywood studios and had an avid eye for a shapely thigh. He was also a pretty hard drinker, slugging down gallons of Vat 69 in each story.

Bellem was so prolific he wrote under several pseudonyms, principally Jerome Severs Perry, Ellery Watson Calder and Harley L. Court. He created a number of recurring characters in each of the *Spicys*. Although primarily a detective story writer, Bellem was at home writing of faraway places and exotic native girls in *Spicy-Adventure* and was equally adept at the *Spicy Mystery* formula—which was not exactly Agatha Christie-style drawing room mystery stories, but the kind of horror once called "Weird Menace." *Spicy Mystery* was Culture's torture and terror pulp. Seemingly ordinary people got into seemingly supernatural situations and along the way, enjoyed steamy sex. In later years, as the horror fad waned, *Spicy Mystery* flirted with a science fiction slant. The most notorious of the line, it was one of the first to fall out of public favor.

But not before publishing in 1936, a cover story called, with the same surprising prescience of Super Magazines, "Batman." It was a horror story, having nothing to do with the Bob Kane character who would be created three years later.

One other prolific *Spicy* writer was Don Cameron, who would become a significant scripter at DC Comics during the '40s and '50s. For the *Spicys*, he used the pen name C.A.M. Donne. The other *Spicy* scribblers were a small, but busy group. Like Bellem, many of them jumped over from Donenfeld's sex pamphlets. Others like Hugh B. Cave (who wrote as Justin Case), Robert E. Howard (who wrote as Sam Walser), Norvell W. Page (aka N. Wooten Poge), James P. Olsen (who wrote as James A. Lawton), Howard Wandrei (who wrote as H. W. Guernsey), Robert A. Garron, (who later claimed that his initials summarized his opinion of the magazine), E. Hoffmann Price (who wrote as E. Hoffmann Price and Hamlin Daly), and Victor Rousseau Emmanuel (who wrote as Lew Merrill, Clive Trent and Hugh Speer), were ordinary pulpsters moonlighting for a fast buck.

Many of the familiar bylines from the early Donenfeld girlie magazines also populated *Spicy* contents pages, including Don King, Arthur Wallace, Phillipe De Mario, Ken Cooper, Frank Kenneth Young and others. Some bylines, like Claire Kennedy and Bob Maxwell, never crossed over into the *Spicys*. This may not mean that they never wrote for these pulps—they almost undoubtedly did—but many writers who were not ashamed to put their own names on girlie tease stories quailed from taking credit for this new kind of fiction, where the implied sex almost always involved murder and brutality.

There are any number of *Spicy* authors—Arthur Humbolt, Willis Vachel Keith, Jo Henry, Colby Quinn, John Bard, and Jose Vaca—who remain total mysteries. The busy Arthur Wallace is believed to be the same person who signed some of his output as Ken Cooper. Which of these—if either—is a real name is unknown, but he usually signed his letters to writer's magazines, Ken Cooper.

One prolific contributor may have rivaled Robert Leslie Bellem for the number of stories written and the profusion of pseudonyms used. His—or her—real name was supposed to be Bud Long. A partial list of his *Spicy* bylines include Cary Moran, Carol Moran, Carl Moore, Clint Morgan, Wallace Kayton, Dale Boyd, Luke

Terry, Mort Lansing and probably a few others. When he was caught plagiarizing a Black Mask story in 1937, his first flock of pen names were quietly retired and replaced by a new untainted group of aliases.

Spicy Comics

While Bellem, Long and a host of other writers set the tone for the magazine, the *Spicy*s are most fondly recalled today for their distinctive house look. Cover artist H. J. Ward, whose lush glowing female figures are as recognizable in their way as Vargas girls, painted most of the *Spicy* covers—probably several hundred in all. He was backed up by the less satisfying work of H. L. V. Parkhurst and Allen Anderson.

The interiors were equally appealing. Led by art director Adolphe Barreaux's chiseled style, the black and white artists included Paul H. H. Stone, Max Plaisted, Will Ely, Joseph Sokoli, John Chambers, Rex Maxon, and countless others. Many of them later to fell into comic book work as publishing fortunes changed.

Barreaux, who had started working for *Ramer Reviews* in 1928, handled the interior art assignments in what was essentially a "shop," much like those soon to feed the hungry comic book industry. Barreaux told comics and pulp historian Ron Goulart in a 1969 letter:

> "My association with my very good friend, the late Frank Armer, began away back around 1928 when I was establishing myself as a magazine illustrator. From 1936 to 1948, my art and production service, Majestic Studios, was, in effect, Trojan's art department."

Barreaux's art staff included Henry Kiefer, Harvey McClelland and letterer Howard Ferguson. He also used Max Plaisted, Jay McArdle, Newton Alfred and others. Virtually all of these talents later gravitated toward working in early comic books.

It was Barreaux who drew what might be justifiably called—all things considered—Donenfeld's first original comic strip. Barreaux's strip did not appear in any of Wheeler-Nicholson's comics, but before that in—of all things—*Spicy Detective Stories*! The strip was called "Sally the Sleuth." It premiered as a two-page feature, in the November, 1934 *Spicy Detective*. Sally, a cute little thing wearing a French beret, talking like Mae West and not yet shed of her baby fat, was a detective working for the Chief. Always operating undercover, within two pages she managed somehow to get into trouble, lose most or all of her clothes, and be rescued by story's end. Sally gave new meaning to the term, comic strip.

Donenfeld's basic approach to his comic strips was nothing new. Essentially, he was inserting a "Tijuana Bible" in each issue of *Spicy Detective*. In fact, among the many rumors surrounding Donenfeld's career was that he himself was a producer of Tijuana Bibles. (Another was that he got his start as a bootlegger.) It may be that Barreaux was actually the producer of these ephemeral proto-comic books.

That "Sally the Sleuth" became one of the most popular features of the *Spicy* line is evidenced by the fact that all the other *Spicy*s followed suit, and inaugurated similar strips.

"Diana Daw" premiered in the November, 1934 *Spicy-Adventure*. She was an explorer. Seeking a lost diamond mine, Diana accidentally kills the sacred lion of the Fippers, is swiftly captured by natives and promptly stripped for slaughter. She's saved by—of all things—a knightly Crusader named Prince Baldwin. When he's killed by her latest tormentors, she hooks up with a Tarzan type who turned out be an amnesiac American Foreign Legionnaire named Ted Morton. Together, they get into strange scrapes in which Diana is sold into slavery, turned into a Harem wench, etc., all while her clothes were routinely scraped off and her chastity threatened.

Although the strip was signed Clayton Maxwell, the art is the work of Max Plaisted, who illustrated the bulk of the Dan Turner pulp stories. By 1940, *Spicy-Adventure* began dabbling in science fiction and Diana was abducted to—where else? Venus, where she endured the usual threats to life, limb and lingerie before escaping to Mercury, Mars and a forced marriage to Etan, pirate ruler of Karzoom.

"Betty Blake" premiered in *Super-Detective Stories*, with art by *Spicy* cover artist, H. L. V. Parkhurst. This was a much tamer strip. She got to keep her clothes on most of the time. The result was dull.

Spicy Mystery was slower to get a successful feature going. Its first attempt did not appear until the August, 1937 issue. That was "The Astounding Adventures of Olga Mesmer, the Girl with the X-Ray Eyes," (see The Pulp Connection, *CBM* #51). The writer was unknown—he may have been Worth B. Carnahan, who was the only writer Barreaux ever named as working for Majestic—but the strip was signed by the artist Watt Dell, who had earlier signed his interior artwork as Watt Dell Lovett. Fated to last only a few months, Olga Mesmer was nevertheless the first

superhero published by Harry Donenfeld's already far-flung empire.

Born with dormant supersensory abilities, according to the text, they "burst into light once she is aroused." Her origin was vaguely Supermanish. She was the daughter of the Queen of Venus, although Olga was born on planet Earth. In one sequence, Olga transferred her abilities to boyfriend Rod Prescott via a blood transfusion—a gimmick that later became a Superman staple. Olga was dropped suddenly late in 1938, her continuity actually wrapped up with a forced happy ending, not long after Superman first appeared. Perhaps the powers that were did not want Olga taking away from Superman's then-unique appeal.

It wasn't until 1940, with the science fiction strip, "Vera Ray," that *Spicy Mystery* finally had a regular comics feature. This was another Watt Dell strip—although signed Clayton Maxwell. Vera was basically a knockoff of Olga Mesmer. Exposed to her father's Green Ray at birth, she acquires some unusual powers, including the ability to glow in the dark and paralyze with her touch. But when her radioactive fingers touch her obligatory boyfriend,

Tom Parnell, he gains temporary superstrength, just like Olga's Rod Prescott.

Vera's first adventure took her to a subterranean world full of giant demonic men straight out of Olga Mesmer, but as the issues flew by, she became a kind of female Flash Gordon, who galivanted around the solar system with Tom and her father, Dr. Hannibal Ray, battling assorted aliens and the like.

Thus, when Harry Donenfeld agreed to print Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson's first issue of the all-new *New Fun Comics*, he was agreeing to something that he knew from personal experience could be a success. It's not out of the realm of possibility that when Nicholson could not land any syndicate strip reprint rights, it was Donenfeld who suggested that original material be used. Donenfeld already had Barreaux's shop on staff. In fact, the very first issue of *New Fun* contained an Adolphe Barreaux feature, a time travel strip called "The Magic Crystal of History." Barreaux occasionally packaged material for publishers other than Donenfeld. For several years starting in 1935, a short-lived futuristic adventure strip, "Ace Jordan," ran in Standard Magazine's *Thrilling Adventures*. Drawn by Max Plaisted, it bore the unmistakable stamp of the Majestic shop. Barreaux also drew two 1940 serials for *Champion Comics*' "The Blazing Scarab" and "The Dragon's Teeth," the latter written by Bellem. *Champion* was launched by Worth B. Carnahan. No coincidence there.

The Corner Office

While Donenfeld's involvement with both Culture and National is well documented, the role of Frank Armer in the comic book industry has never been explored. But Armer did have a role, and a significant one, at that.

The first link between Frank Armer and National is documented in the November, 1935 issue of *Writer's Digest*. In a market notice, the magazine announced a new, but unnamed funny comic book coming out from publisher Frank Armer. The notice lists Donenfeld's 480 Lexington Avenue address and says that Chas. B. McCormack will edit the title. The only comic book this could be is *New Comics* (later to become *Adventure Comics*), and the company's first printed in what became the standard comic size format. *New Comics* premiered with a December, 1935 cover date and was DC's second comic title. It's interesting that this occurred while Nicholson was still involved in National Magazines. It's also of interest that Chas. McCormack's name is a new one to the early history of DC. The earliest editors of record at National were Nicholson, former pulp editor William H. Cook, and artists Vincent Sullivan, Whitney Ellsworth, and future Funnies Inc. founder, Lloyd Jacquet. Little is known of McCormack, other than he was a gag writer, and therefore a logical person to edit a humor comic book.

A few years later, the August, 1939 *Writer's Digest* unequivocally links Armer's Trojan with the early DC Comics:

> "Trojan Publications and the allied magazines at 125 E. 46th offer very little market at all this summer. *Private Detective Stories* is stocked up. The comics are staff prepared: *Action Comics, Detective Comics, Adventure Comics* and *Fun Comics*."

Donenfeld and Armer might appear to have been maintaining separate editorial offices, but in fact this is one of the many business fictions attached to their operation. In fact, as *Writer's Digest* noted on several occasions, Donenfeld held forth in a single corner building—125 E. 46th Street and 480 Lexington Avenue were the same building!

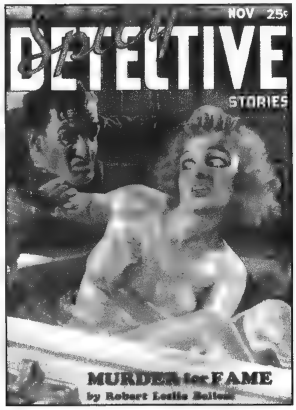
In 1936, they launched another imprint, Spartan Publications, in order to publish *Easy Money*, a magazine aimed, apparently, at the money-hungry as opposed to the sex-hungry. It went nowhere. They also started a short-lived book imprint, Valhalla Press, that same year. Its first release was Cary Moran's *Killer's Caress*. The novel listed an "editorial committee" said to be responsible for selecting future titles. The group included, Robert Leslie Bellem and two of his pseudonyms, E. Hoffmann Price and his alter ego, Hamlin Daly, as well as Ken Cooper/Arthur Wallace, Don King, Claire Kennedy, and Bob Maxwell. It's assumed that at least one of the four dangling bylines was a pen name of Bob Maxwell.

The second and apparently last Valhalla release was *Passion Pulls the Trigger* by Arthur Wallace. Years later this book was reprinted by another publisher and copyrighted by Frank Armer. This suggests that Armer could have used the Wallace pen name.

Presumably, Ajax Publishing Company was another limb of Trojan. Its sole release, *New York Behind the Scenes*, was hawked through ads in various Trojan titles into the 1940s. Ajax's address was 480 Lexington Avenue.

One of the strangest of Donenfeld's ventures were a pair of juvenile pulps he released in partnership with former *Life* editor Hugh Layne under the company name, Layne Publishing Company. They were *Boy's Adventure Magazine* and *Girl's Adventure Magazine*. Both featured Hardy Boys-style lead novels sprinkled with an unprecedented eight pages of humorous comic strips like "Sonny Smith" and "Deadwood Gulch" very much like those appearing in the early pre-superhero comic books. These 1936 experiments lasted only a handful of issues.

Despite these misfires, Trojan began a growing pulp line of its own. Beginning in 1937, with *Private Detective Stories*, Armer added titles. Then came *Romantic Detective*, *Romantic Western*, *Romantic Adventure* and *Candid Detective* in 1938. These were intended to be less risqué versions of the *Spicys*, but that, too, was a blind. In actual fact, the same artists and writers filled all of these magazines. *Private Detective Stories*, especially, was nothing more than *Spicy Detective* in a slightly less racy package. It featured the same kind of stories and art. Even Dan Turner appeared in its pages.



There was one significant difference, however. When a writer wrote for *Private Detective*, he often used his own name, where a pen name had served in *Spicy Detective*. Thus, a careful reader could uncover the true identities of his favorite

Spicy authors simply by cross-referencing *Private Detective*. Numerous series characters appeared month to month in both magazines. Only the bylines changed. It was clear that the writers were submitting to an editorial pool in which stories landed in Culture or Trojan magazines entirely by whim. Not only that, but both chains freely reprinted stories and art between them. In fact, two editors, Wilton E. Matthews and Kenneth W. Hutchinson, in effect ran the entire operation. They were the editors of record on the Trojan titles. Early on, the *Spicys* listed a Lawrence Cadman as their editor, but this was a fictitious name masking Frank Armer in the beginning, and later Matthews, an Annapolis Naval Academy washout who assumed editorship in the fall of 1934.

Private Detective even had its own comic strip, a sedate mystery feature about a girl reporter named Sob Sister Sue. Uncredited, the artist signed the strip with a simple "M." He was Rex Maxon, who followed Hal Foster on the Tarzan newspaper strip. Unlike Sally the Sleuth, Sue never lost her clothes.

In 1937, Trojan also issued an authorized pulp magazine version of *The Lone Ranger*. It was short-lived. That same year, for some reason, Donenfeld revived his old Merwil Publications imprint and put out *Don Winslow of the Navy*. It was a pulp, but packaged to look like a comic book, complete with comic style art. However, both issues featured pulp novels. Ads for *Don Winslow* (which is rumored to have been unauthorized), appeared in *The Lone Ranger* pulp. *Romantic Western* soon replaced *The Lone Ranger* on the Trojan schedule.

The *Lone Ranger* was not Donenfeld's first Western. In 1936, he added the inevitable *Spicy Western Stories* to his string. When the title appeared, *Writer's Digest* noted ruefully that "If the new *Spicy* sells, the contamination will spread to the hitherto untouched Western field." No one seemed to be happy with the situation, except Donenfeld and his busy writers.

Spicy Western Stories, too, carried a comic strip. The first two installments of "Polly of the Plains" were signed simply, "Michael." With the third, Joseph Sokoli (whose last name is sometimes given as Skokoli or Szokoli) took over the artistic look of the strip, later giving it over to John Chambers. For years it was rumored that Michael was no less than Sub-Mariner creator Bill Everett, who once claimed to have written and drawn a feature for a *Spicy* pulp, but the style of "Polly of the Plains" doesn't match Everett's. For some reason, the Polly strip died in mid-peril, leaving the poor heroine on the threshold of having her skull split open.

Donenfeld's D. M. Publications continued absorbing competitors. In 1934, Mrs. Merle W. Hersey began editing *Bedtime Stories* and *Tattle Tales* for an outfit known variously as Nuregal and Detinuer. She was still there when D. M. absorbed them in 1937. Detinuer had also established a Wilmington Delaware maildrop, but Donenfeld relocated to Dover, Delaware, which for some strange reason D.M. had established in 1935. Mrs. Hersey doesn't seem to have been absorbed with Detinuer.

Four-Color Action

By 1938, Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson was completely shut out of the company, and the renamed Detective Comics, Inc. was enjoying its first flush of success with Superman starring in *Action Comics* with Batman's takeover of *Detective Comics* on the horizon.

The story of how Donenfeld ended up with Siegel and Shuster's Superman strip when it was sent to him by Max Gaines (an early comics publisher who handled the printing of Donenfeld's comic books), is well known. Although Donenfeld at first scoffed at the Superman concept, (he reportedly exploded, "Nobody's going to believe this! It's impossible!") he published it in *Action Comics* #1, only a month or two after buying out Nicholson.

The first issue of *Action* sold a respectable 65% of its 200,000 print run. Even though Donenfeld was so leery of Superman he put him on only five of the first sixteen covers, by the 16th issue, he was selling an unprecedented 87% of a 725,000 print run. When in June, 1939, Donenfeld printed 500,000 copies of the *Superman* no-number one-shot (#1)—it sold out! Two additional printings of 250,000 and 150,000 respectively also sold out! Impressed enough to do a second issue, Donenfeld was flabbergasted and no doubt delighted when *Superman* #2 sold a million copies in two print runs! It finally convinced him that Superman belonged on every *Action Comics* cover.

Not since the heyday of the 1920s had a pulp magazine enjoyed a million copy circulation—and even then only the absolutely top titles achieved

The Small World of Distribution

Part II

The origins of the Donenfeld pulp empire get murkier the further back you go. The earliest company name directly connected with Donenfeld appears to be the Irwin Publishing Company, named no doubt after Harry Donenfeld's brother Irwin, who was a power at DC Comics during its first three decades.

Irwin became The Merwil Publishing Company, which was incorporated on August 10, 1929 by Harry and Irving (aka Irwin) Donenfeld and Jack Liebowitz. The origin of the name is undiscoverable, but an early Merwil managing editor was Mrs. Merle Hersey, and her first name suggests a partial source for Merwil. Although Frank Armer's last name also contains a "mer."

When Merwil became the D. M. Publishing Company, Mrs. Hersey exits the dissolved company. Miss Cecile F. Glasberg ultimately took over as editor of the D. M. line. She would later be known as Claire Glasberg and Claire Glass, and probably wrote sexy pulp sketches as Claire Kennedy. According to *Author and Journalist*, Cecile Glasberg was "formerly with *Ramer Reviews*," the Frank Armer sex magazine company Donenfeld appears to have absorbed in the early 1930s.

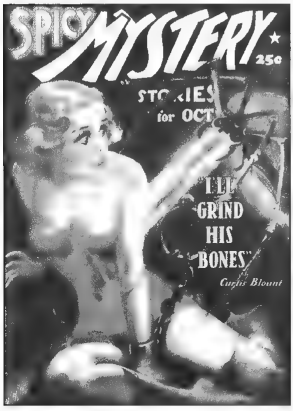
In 1933, several Ramer titles, like *Spicy Stories* and *Pep*, were published by Donny Press. Donenfeld's printing operation, suggesting Donny Press absorbed a financially-besieged Ramer.

that high-water mark. The Depression had made such circulation rates a thing of the past.

Harry Donenfeld found to his astonishment that these easily produced comics magazines were outselling his pulps! They were even outselling his older line of sexy magazines. Suddenly his most successful enterprise was one entirely free of legal entanglements and censorship concerns. Concurrent with this, the authorities, particularly in New York City, were again turning against the sex magazines. The U. S. Post Office's refusal to renew D. M.'s mailing permit was probably the final nail in the coffin. Donenfeld, always nervous about sticky legal entanglements bringing down his incredibly successful comics line, simply killed the entire chain with a stroke.

The March, 1939 *Writer's Digest* announced that Donenfeld's D. M. Magazines had gone out of business, causing the demise of *Gay Parisienne, La Paree Stories, Pep Stories, Gay Broadway, Tattle Tales, Bedtime Stories...* and *Spicy Stories*.

In the same issue, *Writer's Digest* reported that



"Culture Publications is now accepted to have changed owners, and to have severed, some time ago, all connection with Frank Armer's group of magazines in New York City." By that, they unquestionably mean Trojan Publications. But, in reality, the separation may have been simply a slick corporate maneuver designed to protect the tamer Trojan pulps—and presumably Detective Comics, Inc. along with it-from any legal trouble triggered by the *Spicy* line. In actual fact, Harry Donenfeld's wife, Augusta, was installed as a partner in Trojan, thus literally keeping that chain in the family. (What role Leo Greenwald had at this point remains unknown, but in 1940, he took over Worth Carahan's *Champion Comics*. Reportedly his wealthy wife bought him the company to get him out of the house.)

Despite reports, the casual reprinting of stories between the Culture and Trojan groups, as well as the crossover of contributors and their characters continued undisturbed. H. J. Ward's unmistakable covers made the entire ploy seem, to the casual newsstand browser, a transparent sham.

As for the connection between Trojan and DC, it was nebulous, but clues abounded. In 1940, Armer revived his early failure, *Super-Detective*. This time it was a hero pulp of sorts, featuring the exploits of a Doc Savage imitation named Jim Anthony. Jim went through quite an evolution during his brief career. Half-Irish, half-Indian, he often fought crime in yellow trunks, but for one period, he donned a jet black skintight costume that, according to one story, turned him into "Superman and The Shadow and Flash Gordon and the Blue Beetle, all rolled into one." He has been called the only true pulp superhero, with some justification. Eventually, Anthony was turned into a straight detective and was phased out of the magazine in 1943.

There were several echoes between Anthony and early DC comics. For one thing the H. J. Ward covers made him look a bit like Superman with his jet black hair and spitcurl. He sometimes operated out of an underground hideaway called the Teepee. One 1940 drawing showed a cross section of the Teepee that looks startlingly like early drawings of Batman's Batcave, right down to the underground plane hanger beneath a house and deserted barn. Anthony also had a controlling interest in the *New York Star*. The early Clark Kent worked for the Daily Star.

But the astonishing thing about *Super-Detective* was that it used an updated version of the original *Super-Detective Stories* logo. Except that this time, the logo is virtually the Superman comics logo still used to this day—even down to the blue and red color scheme. However, it most closely resembles the version that appeared only on the covers to *Superman* #4 and #5, with its fatter "S" and overlapping "P" and "E." The explanation for this fact may be deceptively simple: The letterer who was responsible for most of the early DC Comics logos was a man named Ira Schnapp, who stayed with the company into the Sixties. His distinctive lettering styles can be traced back to some of the *Spicy* pulps. For example, the slanting Art Deco *Action Comics* logo is very similar to that used on story titles on various *Spicy* covers. In all likelihood, Schnapp was a Culture/Trojan employee who was pressed into service when the comics line was developed. It's also a possibility he belonged to Barreaux's Majestic Studios shop.

The Jim Anthony novels were bylined John Grange. The later stories were the work of the team of Robert Leslie Bellem and W. T. Ballard, but the early stories were by another writer entirely, possibly Victor Rousseau Emmanuel, inasmuch as one Jim Anthony novel features a walk-on by Clive Trent—an Emmanuel *Spicy* byline!

Grand Central Palace

It was around 1940 that the career of early Donenfeld girlie magazine contributor Bob Maxwell kicked into high gear. Maxwell's life took some amazing turns over the decades. Shortly after Superman took off, Maxwell was put in charge of Superman licensing. In 1940, he and his wife Jessica became the producers of Mutual's Superman radio show, with its February premiere. The story behind Maxwell's leap from mild porn to Superman mogul may not ever be explained, but as one of Donenfeld's top writers he may have simply been the right man in the right place and the right time. Maxwell was responsible for overseeing Superman on radio where a number of important innovations, such as the introduction of Kryptonite and Jimmy Olsen were pioneered. Maxwell also wrote the occasional Superman script and is said to have created Kryptonite and Jimmy Olsen. No doubt he named him after one of his fellow *Spicy Detective Stories* writers, James P. Olsen.

Spicy scribe Howard Wandrei was one of those approached to script Superman on radio during its early uncertain phase and painted a vivid portrait of the Maxwell Licensing office:

"The office was a strange place, being jammed with funny toy guns, candy, gum, gadgets like cigar lighters, all kinds of merchandise labeled Superman. The latest was on the desk—a plain shirt, and a sample of Superman labels in a strip

to be cut and each sewed to the shirt's neckband. Maxwell put a transcription on one of these Ansley Dynaphone outfits, and all the gentlemen departed in haste, leaving me to suffer alone. Their own program and all their writers are total anathema to them. They're afraid the program will go sour all of a sudden, and my fiendish ingenuity is going to save them.

Wandrei flunked the task, but Superman and Maxwell Productions both flourished. Maxwell later launched Hop Harrigan and House of Mystery on radio, but twice failed to get a Batman radio program on the air.

Many of the Trojan magazines in the early Forties played up their connection to the famous Superman. Spot illustrations in *Private Detective Stories* and elsewhere showed characters lounging around reading copies of Superman. *Super-Detective* back covers advertised the Superman Krypto-ray gun in 1940. One odd touch was an ad that ran in various 1939 Trojan magazines for a Charles Atlas-style physical development course. The illustration accompanying the ad was simply the Joe Shuster Superman pose used for the Supermen of America club pages. The S symbol on his chest was clumsily whited out, but the drawing is otherwise identical, and not a swipe. This was probably a case of Trojan supplying some handy art for an ad client. It's hard to imagine that kind of steal getting past Donenfeld, Liebowitz and Armer... so they likely were aware of it.

One clue that some of the internal personnel stayed the same lay in the early DC house ads. One, in *Batman* #1, was headed: "The 'Big Six' Comic Magazines still Lead the Field!" just as similar house ads in the *Spicy*s years earlier touted Donenfeld's "Big Five" sex magazines.

Another interesting phenomenon was the occurrence of text stories in the early National titles by writers such as George Shute, whose byline had heretofore seldom appeared outside of the *Spicy* pulps!

And apparently Trojan borrowed the title of its 1941 comic book, *Leading Comics*, when they launched two pulps, *Leading Western* and *Leading Love*, in 1945. The former was a Trojan magazine, the latter a product of Arrow Publications, another Donenfeld outfit launched around the time D. M. was shut down in order to publish titles like *Silk Stocking Parade*. Jessica Maxwell was one of Arrow's editors. Arrow had its offices at 114 East 47th Street, which for a time was also National Comics editorial address. Again, it was a deceptive practice. That address was simply a third side of the massive city-block-sized building called the Grand Central Palace Building, at 480 Lexington, which stood between E. 46th and E. 47th Streets!

In the January, 1992 issue of Robin Snyder's *History of Comics*, DC editor Robert Kanigher seems to confirm this:

> Quite by accident, I landed at National, DC's poor relation (in the same building, the same floor)... ironically, DC's offices were on the Lexington Avenue side and National's faced the far more prestigious Park Avenue side.

In a private letter, *Spicy* writer Howard Wandrei evoked his impressions of the place:

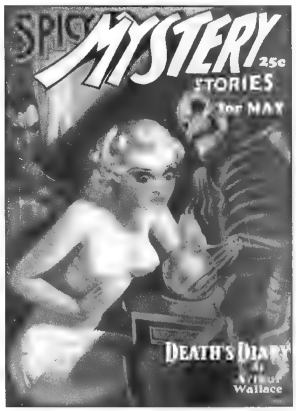
> The name of the company was Trojan, which is or was also the name of a widely marketed rubber prophylactic, and I have always thought there was some connection. The men running the mags and comics were business men who took fliers in any investment that looked good—the stock market, other business ventures, backing plays, etc.; they could be heard muttering in their beards about finding enough banks (deposit limit of $5,000) to put their money in, literally. The huge office building was full of queer enterprises. In one small suite was a very able cartoonist who at the time had a number of negatives hung up to dry on a string; bare dames, I observed with a look; he had a huge pile of obscene photographs, and a shelf of pornographic books was supposed to be available, so somewhere in that stuff was his racket. Among the jobholders and executives—it seemed to be a strong taint in New York—ran the whimsicality of gartersnapping—the gals.

The moonlighting cartoonist was very likely Adolphe Barreaux. By the early '40s, Grand Central Palace was a gigantic beehive housing National Comics, Trojan Publications, Independent News Distributing, Maxwell Productions and other satellites of the Donenfeld empire. Gil Kane recalled it this way in an interview in *Comics Journal* #186:

> When I went up to the offices at DC, it was like stepping into a cathedral at 480 Lexington Avenue. There was an enormous six-foot painting of Superman right on the wall opposite the entry as you came in.

The display painting referred to by Gil was signed Hugh J. Ward—H. J. Ward's full name!

The Culture/Trojan lines continued well into the Forties. But as time went by, the *Spicy*s came under continued pressure. In some localities they had to be sold under the counter, much the way *Playboy* and *Penthouse* are not displayed openly in some stores today. In other places, they could not be sold at all. During the '30s, they experimented with different methods of dealing with varying local tolerances for their magazines. At times, variant issues of some *Spicy* pulps were published simultaneously, featuring different—or retouched—interior illustrations and juggled story lineups. It's thought that the bowdlerized editions might have been used to fulfill mail subscriptions.



By 1943, with the war on and paper shortages cutting into everyone's circulation, Donenfeld and Armer made a move that essentially proved that the corporate separation of Culture and Trojan was a fiction. Overnight, the *Spicy*s became seemingly publications of Trojan Publications. They simultaneously changed titles. *Spicy Detective* became *Speed Detective*, *Spicy Adventure* became *Speed Adventure* and on down the line. Actually, this was a newsstand illusion. The new magazines all began with Vol. 1, No. 1, although they continued all the same writers, characters and features. The supposed reason for the cleanup was to hold onto those all-important US postal mailing privileges.

Cover and interior art was cleaned up to the level of *Private Detective Stories*, but otherwise it was pretty much business as usual. Old *Spicy* stories continued to be printed in these magazines with increasing frequency. At times, it seemed that a good third of each issue consisted of some kind of reprint. And in fact it did.

Absorbing All-American

While his pulp line was going through changes, Donenfeld made a move designed to consolidate his comics empire. For several years, he had been a partner in Max Gaines' All-American Comics Group, which owned such characters as Green Lantern, The Flash and Wonder Woman. While Donenfeld operated out of his plush uptown offices, allegedly hiring and firing secretaries based on their sex appeal, Gaines' line operated out of a dingy Lafayette Street office. Together, the two lines produced a third of the 18 million comic books sold each month! But Donenfeld apparently wasn't satisfied to be a partner and backer. It seems he wanted it all—a pattern of behavior that a decade earlier resulted in his dominating the cut-throat girlie magazine field.

The takeover had its roots in an unusual move, Donenfeld gave his half of All-American to his accountant, Jack Liebowitz. Gaines and Liebowitz didn't get along and the friction forced Gaines to suggest a buyout. Donenfeld and Liebowitz ended up buying Gaines out for fifty thousand dollars early in 1945. The Donenfeld comics empire had coalesced into what is now DC Comics. Although Donenfeld had changed his company name from Detective Comics, Inc. to National Comics, each title still bore the distinctive DC Comics slug in the corner. It's unlikely that Donenfeld retained a sentimental attachment to the DC symbol as such. More than likely, in his heart of hearts, DC meant, not Detective Comics, but Donenfeld Comics, just as earlier he had used the company name of D. M. Publications.

Editors in Sing Sing

Donenfeld didn't have long to congratulate himself on a series of shrewd business moves. Late in 1946, while the comic book field was beginning to come down off its wartime circulation high, skullduggery was uncovered in the editorial offices of Trojan Publications.

It began when star scribbler Robert Leslie Bellem, still penning the endless exploits of his sloshed sleuth, Dan Turner, in *Speed Detective* as well as the new *Dan Turner Hollywood Detective*, (which contained a Dan Turner comic strip he scripted himself, illustrated by Max Plaisted) was summoned by the Internal Revenue Service to explain why he had paid only part of the taxes he'd owed from sales to Trojan that year. Bellem protested that his sales had not been as great as Trojan records had indicated. As it happened, Bellem's close friend, sometime collaborator and fellow Trojan contributor, W. T. Ballard, was having the same argument.

Both men went to Frank Armer with their problem. An internal audit showed that Bellem and Ballard were not at fault. The two main Culture/Trojan editors, Kenneth Hutchinson and Wilton Matthews, were the culprits. They had for several years been running a team scam. Plucking old stories from back issues, they reprinted them under house names like John Wayne and John Ford but made out new payment vouchers to prolific *Spicy* writers as if the stories had been just purchased. But Matthews and Hutchinson cashed the checks themselves through a friendly bartender.

The New York Times for January 24, 1947 explained that for the length of the scam, the pair made a point of intercepting the tax statements normally mailed to contributors by Trojan. As it happened, neither editor was at his desk on January 15, when the statements came in. Another writer, T. W. Ford, subsequently received a statement for seven stories accepted by Trojan in 1946—when in fact he had sold the company no stories that year. Shown the checks issued to his name, Ford proved the signatures were forged.

Meanwhile, Matthews and Hutchinson got wind of the problem and sent Ford a letter, claiming a mistake had been made, and that the tax statement sent him was really intended for another writer who used the pen name of Tom Ford. When that didn't work, they forged another a letter, purportedly from T. W. Ford, admitting that he made a mistake and claiming the stories and signatures were his after all. They showed this forgery to Frank Armer, who grew suspicious because in the letter "Ford" conveniently mentioned that further communication would be impossible because he was on his way to New Mexico.

When T. W. Ford denounced the letter as another fraud, Matthews and Hutchinson were summoned to the offices of Assistant District Attorney Charles B. Woolsey, and arrested. But not until in a final paroxysm of cover-up, they burned every scrap of Trojan manuscript, payment record and file copy in the office, then drowned their guilt in drink.

The *Times* reported that Trojan office stationery was emblazoned with the motto "Crime does not pay," and questioned whether the two ever read their own letterheads very carefully. It later came out that they had paved the way for their scheme by suggesting that contributors whose works they intended to pirate burn the carbons of their stories, ostensibly because of threatened legal or censorship action, but actually so the authors could not later prove the stories were their own!

For months if not years after, the District Attorney's office and the IRS sat Trojan authors down with back copies of old issues of *Spicy Detective* and *Super-Detective* trying to separate the original stories from the reprints, identify the pen names versus house names, in an ultimately hopeless effort to figure out legal culpabilities and tax liabilities. Some prolific authors were forced to admit they had gone blank, and had no idea which stories were their's!

Writer Howard Wandrei, who was for a time

suspected of involvement in the conspiracy because of his own past criminal record (while in college, he indulged on a number of "thrill" burglaries, for which he went to prison) and the unfortunate fact that his wife was having an affair with Matthews, and would sometimes cash Wandrei's checks herself, subsequently learned the not-for-publication version of events from Mike Estrow, Armer's lawyer. It seems that Armer's jealous, spurned secretary in reality triggered the discovery. Wandrei informed his brother Donald in 1951:

"What touched off that Trojan-Arrow scandal was Norah Murray… out of vengeance, because …one night, … Matthews wouldn't have anything to do with her…. What happened was that Matthews got sick (bronchitis), had told Hutch to empty that desk-drawer in such case, but just then Hutch went off on a bender. Armer wanted some reports, told his secretary (Norah) to go through the desk, and found a file of correspondence from Connie to Suzanne, and promptly went to town, Armer turning the whole matter over to the District Attorney. What made Norah wild was the unflattering terms which Connie had used in the letter, saying what a fool of a woman Norah was."

Connie was Wandrei's unfaithful spouse, and Suzanne their daughter. Both Matthews and Hutchinson reportedly spent so much of their working day hunkered over the lobby bar of 480 Lexington or passed out drunk at their desks that Frank Armer actually considered installing a private bar in the Trojan offices in order to keep his wayward editors on the premises at all times.

Their scheme had cost Trojan an estimated $90,000 over the years. Matthews and Hutchinson were tried and convicted of check juggling and received sentences of two to four years in Sing Sing. The June, 1947 *Writer's Digest* immediately announced that the Trojan, Arrow and Speed lines were all being consolidated under a new corporate name, Trojan Magazines Inc., under the editorial directorship of Adolphe Barreaux, no less. (Bill Gwinn took over the action titles and Madge Bindamin the love pulps.)

Simultaneously, Trojan lost its chief paper supply when a rival publisher bought the mills which had supplied the chain. In the paper-scarce days following World War II, this was a crisis. The *Speed* line was killed. *Super-Detective* disap-

SPICY PRICES

by Dave Smith

[illegible] Prices are for VG copies; "Goodstone" refers to *The Pulps—Fifty Years of American Pop Culture* compiled and edited by Tony Goodstone, 1970 Chelsea House, NY, which [illegible] covers in a 48-page color section.

Spicy Adventure

Jul 1933 (Vol. 1 #1; [illegible] not published for distribution) . . . . [illegible]
Nov 1934 (Vol. 1 #2; first distributed issue) [illegible]
Dec 1934 [illegible]
Jan-Dec 1935 [illegible] @
Jan-Oct 1936 [illegible] @
Nov 1936 (Classic "Hashish from Hoshepur" cover; used in Goodstone) [illegible]
Dec [illegible]
Jan-Dec 1937 [illegible] @
Jan-Dec 1938 [illegible] @
Jan-Dec 1939 [illegible] @
Jan-Dec 1940 [illegible] @
Jan-Dec 1941 [illegible] @
Jan-Nov 1942 [illegible] @
Dec 1942 (Last issue; title changes to Speed Adv.) $160

Spicy Detective

Apr 1934 (Vol.1 #1; note: it has not been determined if this is an Ashcan) [illegible]
Jun-Jul 1934 [illegible]
Aug-Dec 1934 [illegible]
Jan-Dec 1935 [illegible]
Jan-Feb 1936 . . . . . $200 @
Mar 1936 (Used in Goodstone) [illegible]
Apr-Dec 1936 [illegible]
Jan-Dec 1937 [illegible]
Jan-Dec 1938 [illegible]
Jan-Dec 1939 [illegible]
Jan-Dec 1940 [illegible]
Jan-Dec 1941 . . . . . $120 @
Jan-Nov 1942 [illegible] @
Dec 1942 (Last issue; title changes to Speed Det.) $160

Spicy Mystery

Jul 1934 (Vol. 1 #1; Ashcan edition) $600
Jun 1934 (Vol. 1 #2; first distributed issue; classic "girl on the coffin" issue) [illegible]
Jul-Dec 1935 [illegible] @
Jan 1936 [illegible]
Feb 1936 (Classic "Batman" cover; used in Goodstone) $500
Mar-Dec 1936 [illegible] @
Jan-Nov 1937 [illegible] @
Dec 1937 ("Hooded menace" cover) [illegible]
Jan-Dec 1938 [illegible] @
Jan-Dec 1939 [illegible] @
Jan-Dec 1940 [illegible] @
Jan-Dec 1941 $150 @
Jan-Dec 1942 [illegible] @
[illegible] to Speed Mystery) $200

Spicy Western

Nov (Vol. 1 #1) 1936 . $200
[illegible]
Feb-Dec 1937 [illegible]
Jan-Dec 1938 [illegible] @
Jan-Dec 1939 [illegible]
Jan-Dec 1940 [illegible] @
Jan-Dec 1941 [illegible]
Jan-Nov 1942 [illegible]
Dec 1942 (Last issue; title changes to Speed Western) . . . $80

Due to the lack of a standardized price guide for pulps, values can vary widely on these books. The prices listed here are based on rounded averages of sales and advertised prices 1990-97.

peared for a year. *Private Detective Stories* cut back its frequency. Several short-lived titles, including a flock of Arrow magazines like *Western Love, Magic Love, Golden Love Tales*, and *Amour* were folded after Trojan was forced to skip an entire month's worth of books.

And a new line of digest magazines Armer started in 1945 under the imprint Golden Willow Press was summarily folded.

A year later, the firm was down to just five pulp titles–*Private Detective, Hollywood Detective, Super-Detective, Fighting Western* and *Leading Western*.

Bereft of two of its star editors, Trojan struggled along for several years after, but the pulps as a species were in decline.

In 1950, Frank Armer left the firm to go into advertising. At the end of the year, the remaining Trojan pulps were killed. Canceled were *Super-Detective, Hollywood Detective, Private Detective* and *Pocket Detective*—the latter one of several short-lived digest magazines Trojan had launched under the continued editorship of Adolphe Barreaux.

To the end, they all carried comic strips. The seemingly inextinguishable Sally the Sleuth was still going strong. During the war, she had lost her babyfat, learned to keep her wits and clothes about her and gained two full pages of story in every issue of *Speed Detective*.

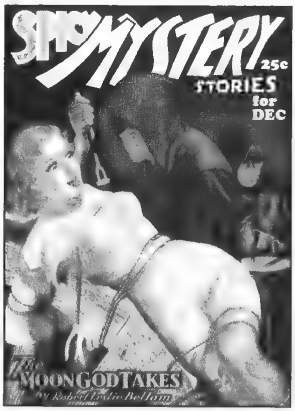
Adolphe Barreaux had moved away from his static six-panels-per-page layout style into a more sophisticated layout style. After *Speed Detective* bit the dust, Sally found a home in *Private Detective Stories*. Her stories by that time were running eight pages and could easily have appeared in any comic book published at the time.

In fact, Fredric Wertham thought she was so typical of the genre that he reprinted a Sally panel from the June, 1949 *Private Detective* in his *Seduction of the Innocent*. The panel, a famous one, shows a woman's body being discovered by a milkman, who exclaimed: "A dame! And she's been croaked!"

By this time, Barreaux was signing his work Charles Barr. Other strips popped up in other Trojan titles. Among them, "Gail Ford, Girl Friday" by Eugene Leslie, "Ray Hale, News Ace," by Newton Alfred, both in *Super-Detective*. A latter-day Polly of the Plains called "Wilma West" surfaced in *Leading Western*, signed Don Tallant. This magazine also featured R. Morton's "Tex Gordon."

DC's Other Comics

It's fitting that the final Trojan pulps should carry comic strips, and especially Sally the Sleuth. But Trojan wasn't quite dead as a publisher. In 1950, they branched out in two new directions. Under Barreaux's editorship, they launched a string of photo magazines, including *TV Starland, Candid* and *Picture Follies*. They also



sprouted a separate comic book arm, again under Barreaux's control, in which several titles were published under the Trojan Magazines imprint. The purpose of this line is unclear. Everyone knew the pulps were dying, killed off by a combination of TV and paperback novels. But comics were still relatively healthy. Perhaps Donenfeld thought that his "pulp comics" could make a successful transition to comic books.

And so Sally the Sleuth found a new home in *Crime Smashers* and *Western Crime Busters*, two titles published by Ribage, an apparent subsidiary of Trojan. Dan Turner took up residence in *Crime Mysteries*. Most of this material were reprinted. Other comics published by Trojan included *Beware* and *Oh, G.I. Jane, Brother*, and *The Farmer's Daughter*. Still more titles were published under the Stanhall, Pix Parade and Children's Comics names. And some have suggested that Gilmor and Stanmor belong to this group. As he had in his pulp days, Donenfeld displayed an apparent mania for maintaining numerous companies—members of whose boards of directors overlapped.

For many years, he had an interest in son-in-law Frederick Iger's American Comics Group (ACG) which, unlike the Gaines' All-American line, was never consolidated with National. (ACG's founder was B. W. Sangor, a lawyer who with Leo Rosenbaum, (aka ACG editor Richard Hughes), were reportedly involved with publishing girlie-type magazines during the '30s–indicating perhaps another unknown branch of the Donenfeld pulp empire.)

The Trojan line of comic books continued until 1955, when it was dragged into oblivion by the sudden collapse of its distributor, Leader News. Because it specialized in "horror and headlight" comics, image-conscious DC apparently felt no desire to absorb its titles or characters.

Super TV and Tangled History

Trojan's creative talent scattered to the four winds. Adolphe Barreaux went over to Fawcett magazines. Star writer Robert Leslie Bellem got into TV, scripting, among other shows, *Superman* and *The Lone Ranger*. He was hired for the former show by Whitney Ellsworth, the early DC editor who in 1953 replaced Bob Maxwell as the *Superman* TV producer.

Maxwell had produced, as well as co-scripted under his sometime pen name of Richard Fielding, the 1951 RKO feature, *Superman and the Mole Men*, which was the kickoff for the now-classic Superman TV series. As producer, it was Maxwell who cast George Reeves as Superman, as well as picking Phyllis Coates to play the first TV Lois Lane.

When he took on production chores for the first Superman TV season, he wrote the origin script, "Superman on Earth" and cast the roles of Jimmy Olsen and Perry White. Fans of the show profess that the Maxwell episodes are particularly gritty and violent, and with good reason. Maxwell's pulp background made that style of writing impossible to avoid.

Although Maxwell had been hired by National to produce both the feature and the TV show, he was let go in 1953, in part because of his personal style (he was not liked universally) and in part because this was the era of Frederic Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent*, which was riddled with examples of alleged comic book perversion

taken in large part from Donenfeld's Trojan comics. It seems no one wanted to risk killing a lucrative TV show.

Maxwell went on to produce the early seasons of the classic *Lassie* TV show, later selling out his interest. He took a stab at a show called *Father of the Bride*, a 1961 one-season sitcom. Then, ironically, he slipped through the cracks of early TV and fell back where he started: grinding out sex stories, this time for the paperback porn market.

One of these novels, *The Jaded Sex*, (Neva Books, 1963) featured a protagonist called Ted Morton—the same name as Diana Daw's old sidekick in *Spicy-Adventure Stories*. This suggests Maxwell scripted some of the *Spicy* strips, perhaps including Olga Mesmer. We may never know. Maxwell died in the early 1971, having reestablished himself as a TV producer in Toronto.

No one knows what happened to the definitive *Spicy* cover artist H. J. Ward, who had once executed classy magazine covers as Hugh Ward before becoming a slave of the *Spicys*. Except among a diminishing circle of fans and collectors, the Culture/Trojan empire is a fading memory.

The *Spicy* pulps are long gone now. Their daring covers and titillating stories have become, with time, tame and rather quaint. Prime-time television is much more raw than *Spicy Detective* at its worst. Harry Donenfeld died in 1965, and Frank Armer only months later. But for whatever reason, some of the current DC Comics corporate powers prefer to gloss over their wild and woolly antecedents. Or maybe it's just that they don't know what *Spicy Detective* and the other titles were really all about.

That's too bad. DC's corporate roots may be tangled, but they sure are fascinating. And who would want to disown the likes of Sally the Sleuth and the very first super-heroine, Olga Mesmer? ■

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by Robert M. Overstreet

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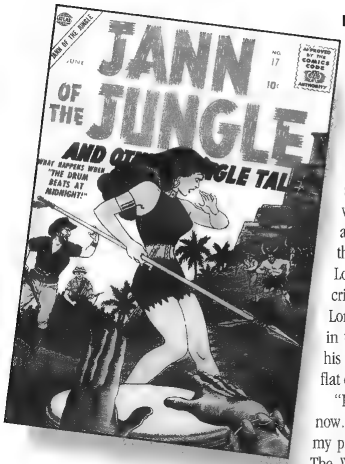

Bill Everett's elegant cover for the final Jann Of The Jungle issue (#17, Jun 1957). Jann didn't last long enough to become a major rival for Lorna.

cuts herself free. Quickly she shows the natives who are dancing around the stake that she if free. "Behold!" she cries. "My magic is greater than yours! It can sever any bond!" Naturally the witch doctor in the group doesn't agree and says so. "Your words are the words of the hyena..." counters Lorna. "This will still your tongue!" cries the witch doctor as he leaps at Lorna, knife in hand. Lorna kicks him in the ankle, disarms him, side steps his charge and the witch doctor falls flat on his face.

"I proclaim myself witch doctor now...and appoint M'Tuba to rule in my place!" cries Lorna, knife in hand. The Wafisi kneel and genuflect before Lorna, chanting "Great is the White Goddess!" and "Mighty is the Jungle Queen!" Then Lorna tells M'Tuba she must travel deep into the jungles to seek out others who may need her help "...as my father would have wanted me to..." Then, the grateful M'Tuba hands over Mikki to Lorna with words: "Please...take Mikki with you...as my gift! He will love you and comfort you in your loneliness!" Lorna acknowledges M'Tuba's gift, saying as she does so: "Thank you, M'Tuba! I know how much you love Mikki, so I know your gift comes from the heart!" A touching scene follows as M'Tuba hands over the monkey.

The final scene shows Lorna walking into a vivid, red sunset. "And so, M'Tuba waves a sad farewell to a girl, and a monkey as they walk into deep shadows of the African jungle...into the mysterious unknown!" That is the final caption of Lorna's first story.

Story two introduces us to Agu the Giant. Agu is a gorilla about as high as the Empire State Building. The tale has a monster cobra that Agu kills, and later Lorna saves his life from African warriors. All is well at the end with Agu and Lorna becoming the best of friends.

The third tale is "The Magic of M'Tuba." M'Tuba was the man who taught Lorna the ways of the jungle, and it looked as though this feature was to be a series. Unfortunately for M'Tuba, he was replaced by Greg Knight, a white hunter, in the second issue.

"Jungle Uprising" is the final story in Lorna's attractive first issue. It concerns a lunatic explorer, bondage...Lorna's tied up twice in this comic..., a diamond cache and giant snail. After rapid fire action over five pages, the lunatic gets his comeuppance when the snail has him for lunch!

One or two notes on the first issue. It is a little gem because of Werner Roth's art which makes Lorna decidedly sexy. The origin tale is probably the best, but giant gorillas, snakes and man-eating giant snails are a bit ridiculous. Stories concerning lost world dinosaurs, huge serpents, and giant octopuses popped up quite often in Lorna's 26 issue run.

Issue #2 had a much improved cover. Yellow title set against a purple sky, Lorna plunging out of the cover, spear and knife in her hands. Behind an elephant holds a black warrior aloft in its trunk, another elephant charges into the picture from the right where a white man appears bent on chucking a warrior over his shoulder. A fellow named Brodsky drew the cover which was the best of the three he did.

Turn the pages and we are introduced to Greg Knight, famous white hunter, who would remain as Lorna's reluctant love life until the end of the series. It was in the first tale called "Killer Rogue" that Greg Knight met Lorna.

It begins with this interesting caption: "Every day brought new dangers to the jungle realm of Lorna who was sworn to protect her domain with her life! But this day brought two dangers! One...the cruel rifle of the white hunter who killed for the sake of killing..." which is the way of most hunters, isn't it? However, we can deduce from this caption that Lorna would have little sympathy with hunters in the stories to come.

Continuing the anti-hunting theme, Lorna voices her distaste on page two in the first two frames: "If we stay out of the way of the rogue, he won't bother us, Mikki...but we have to do something about the hunters! Its their kind who bring about beasts like the rogue!" Mikki replies: "Chee! Chee!" Lorna is in her stride now. Swinging sexily through the treetops, she continues: "White hunters kill for the sport...not for food or protection! They invade the jungle and frighten and kill its creatures! They kill...and leave the young to starve by themselves...or to turn into killer rogues! It's wrong Mikki...WRONG!"

With opinions like that, Lorna was obviously echoing Stan Lee's sentiments and editorial policy. The hunting fraternity was no doubt displeased with such forthright views but probably forgave Lorna because she was...well...such a raving beauty.

For some reason, Greg Knight, the hunter's guide in this story, didn't seem to think so. As Lorna was diving and jumping through the trees, she looked down and saw Greg for the first time. Her eyes lit up, her expression one of admiration. "Did you see him, Mikki? So handsome...so strong... so young!" Lorna has been well and truly smitten.

We find out early Greg's distaste for women when he admits to his hunting companion that he was once in love but the girl jilted him for a guy with more money. "No more women for me!" he says. The story develops when a savage lion tries to kill the sleeping Greg, but Lorna saves him by killing the lion instead. Lorna leaves the body by Greg who slept through the whole thing. When he awoke, he was very surprised by the dead lion. "SOMEBODY saved my life," he murmurs, "A friend..."

The tale continues with Lorna stopping the hunter from killing a mother antelope and delivering a stiff lecture to the

surprised men. She turns to Greg and tells him he is ignorant of the ways of the jungle. Then she tells of the time a hunter killed the mother of an infant who grew to hate all humans. "Men call it the killer rogue," she says, "...and it is near us now!"

Suddenly there is a banging, crashing noise accompanied by a screaming that froze the white hunters where they stood. The next moment the rogue appears; a giant bull elephant maddened with rage. The hunters fire again and again at the elephant, but nothing stops its charge. Except Lorna, who whirls on a vine in front of it, and leads the creature to the edge of a deep pit into which it falls. Fittingly, it used to be an elephant's graveyard. Here the elephant dies...as Lorna says: "...At last, he finds peace!" Greg tries to admonish her for risking her life to which she replied she was safe. Then Greg uttered the one phrase that was to become his trademark throughout the Lorna series: "A jungle in no place for a woman!"

Greg is in the next story, "The Black Swamp!" It is about a funny, bespectacled little man who hires Greg to take him to the dangerous Black Swamp to try and get a rare treasure to take back to his museum. The treasure is the "Lupuu, the Queen of Orchids." A strange tale, this, and filled with action. First there are snakes, then crocodiles. Lorna saves both men and in the end one of the crocodiles is a mere skin hiding a long lost professor who explains that he and his bride came to the swamps ten years previously in search of the orchids she loved. She contracted a fever from which she died. The grief stricken professor buried her among the flowers she loved so dear, and became friendly with the crocs who helped him guard his wife's resting place. Lorna, Greg, and the other man promise not to reveal his secret.

Then there's the first "Jungle Adventures with Greg Knight." It's a story of Whitey, the jungle tramp, who stumbles across Greg who has sprained his ankle. He helps Greg back to the plantation and tells him he has discovered a cache of ivory. "I'm all set for life, now!" he says.

Of course, Whitey Cobb, weak from lack of food or water, and the strain of carrying Greg back, dies. He tells Greg to locate the ivory from the map in his coat pocket, and send it to his son in America. An orderly overhears, steals the map, joins forces with another ruffian, and they go to find the ivory. Eventually Greg catches up with them, cracks their heads together, and saves the ivory for Whitey's son.

Finally, a tale about "The Head-Hunters!" There were head-hunters in Lorna's first adventure, if you remember. Greg and Lorna are captured by the Gaturi tribe whose leader collects heads. He considers Lorna's head a prize. Swift talking by Lorna allows a reprieve for Greg who is just about to lose his head. Instead the chief is persuaded to show his strength against Greg in a fight to the finish. Guess who won! The tribe dispatched their fallen leader to one of their head poles once he lost the battle.

Agu the giant gorilla returns in the third issue which finds Lorna wearing a bikini...but never shows her midriff. The first illustration finds Lorna in a classic bondage situation, but one of the most effective splash pictures in this issue begins the finale. Another good issue.

More adventures with Agu in #4. Lorna is beautifully drawn in this comic; a real treat for the eyes. You just have to see it to believe it. The comic is Werner Roth at his best. But for true imagination and lovely comic book artwork, look at the lead story in issue #5. It is wonderful stuff. Called "Voodoo Madness!" this 7 page tale is highly original with some of the best good girl art I've ever seen.

In issue #6 Jungle Girl voyeurs get a real treat in the last story called "Double Danger!" It concerns a Lorna look-a-like, lots of classic female punch-ups, and the usual high standard Werner Roth art. Incidentally, this is the issue Lorna is deposed as monarch, her title becoming "Lorna, The Jungle Girl." The cover is by Russ Heath, who also is responsible for issue #7's cover. Great Werner Roth art gives the reader another beautiful issue.

Somewhat disappointing Al Hartley covers on issue #8 and 9 don't deter the Roth art inside. The first two tales in issue #8 are quite good. Agu the friendly giant ape is in the first story which concerns a ghost who turns out to be a fellow in luminous paint. Or something like that. The second tale has a monster fish with an appetite for unsavory beings. Then there's Greg Knight's fable, then a rather stupid tale about a giant half ape, half croc. Lorna remains enticing even when she is gouging the monster's eyes out. Bit of the old injury to the eye stuff here.

Issue #9 pits invading Communists against Lorna's jungle domain...gotta get the Red Menace in somewhere. They frighten the natives off with a giant bat that is really an airplane. Apparently they want to set up an air base to ferry in supplies for underground forces. Naturally the Reds get their desserts at the hands of Lorna. What a way to go! Next tale has Agu finding himself a giant twin, and a mad doctor who has the gift of hypnotism.

Gorillas and Commies feature in issue #10 and there's a monstrous creature unleashed from the depths of the Earth by an erupting volcano. Then we come to the final pre-Code Lorna which is #11. Werner Roth does an excellent job with the artwork, particularly in the first and last tales. The second story is trite, and it about a sort of whirlwind which transports man and beast...and Lorna...to a lost world.

March 1955 and Lorna's first post-Code comic book. The cover is a good one done by none other than Joe Maneely. The first two Lorna stories could well

The best of the two Joe Maneely Lorna, The Jungle Girl covers (#12, Mar 1955).

have been pre-Code and were the last to be done by Werner Roth. The final piece is an insult to Lorna, it is so badly drawn. Bob Brown was the artist, and it was his first and last time drawing the beautiful blonde jungle girl.

Almost all of Lorna's best covers were post-Code. Look at #13. It is the work of Syd Shores and he has captured Lorna and her beasts magnificently. I think perhaps Lorna's legs might be too long for comfort, though. But inside we find Lorna's new artist and it is Jay Scott Pike. He remains with Lorna until the end, and was an excellent replacement for Werner Roth, whose departure still remains a mystery. He did, however, turn up in the '60s contributing to the first few issues of *X-Men*.

Jay Scott Pike gave Lorna a leaner, more sophisticated look. And no doubt because of the Comics Code, her chest was smaller and proportionately better. In issue #14 there's a lot of bondage panels, surprising really, considering the Code's restrictions. There are more monsters, this time from the aquatic deep, who are controlled by an attractive woman dressed in red. In the end Lorna catches her and makes her release her hypnotic powers over the underwater creatures. There's a great cover by Syd Shores, who also illustrates the Greg Knight feature.

Al Williamson and Colletta shared the chores on the cover of #18, and as would be expected, it is very good. John Romita turns up as the artist on Greg Knight after a three issue stint by Syd Shores. Joe Maneely did another good cover on #19. Inside the stories were beginning to have a "where have I read this before?" feel about them. In many cases they were earlier Lorna tales revamped to appear different.

While Jay Scott Pike's Lorna is beautifully drawn, his male figures are lacking. They don't seem to have the confidence or spirit of Werner Roth's men, regardless of race, creed or color. But Pike's Lorna was so good, particularly in some of the action panels, that one tended not to notice the men, anyway.

Lorna went bi-monthly from issue #7, unusual in a company which prided itself on monthly books. A new feature, "Tales of the Jungle," began in issue #17 and was about the jungle's animals. Bill Everett did the covers for issue #21, 23-26. They are superb, particularly issue #23. It jumps right out at you and features Lorna at her very best.

We have now reached the final issue of *Lorna, the Jungle Girl*. Unfortunately, the tales are not the most memorable for Lorna's last appearance on the newsstands. In one tale, "Doom walked the Jungle," Lorna falls into a pit trap set by two evil men who are after a rare white lion. In the pit is a gorilla who hurt his leg when he fell. Lorna fashions a splint for his leg. Mikki, Lorna's ever faithful, and intelligent monkey companion, is able to climb out of the pit and throw vines down to enable Lorna and the gorilla to haul themselves out.

Once out of the pit, Lorna finds abandoned animals strung up in rope traps, left to die by the men who are only interested in catching the albino lion. Of course Lorna frees them. Later she comes across two men who have caught the albino's mate, and are dangling her from the end of a rope to use as a decoy. At this point the jungle animals step in and help trap the bad guys.

Lorna's last adventure finds her in a dress and in the big city. "This is where you belong, Lorna...not in the jungle!" says Greg Knight. Naturally, there is an adventure concerning two rogues Lorna chased out of the jungle because they were trying to capture the part ape, part lion Night Beast. Well, they captured it, Lorna retrieved it, and Greg and she admit they are better off in the jungle. Not a great story to end Lorna on.

One day there were Atlas comic books, the next there were none. Atlas' violent upheaval and implosion had taken place. *Lorna* disappeared with most of the other Atlas titles. The stage was set for a new beginning, for a new Marvel which was to sweep the comics' board. That is another story...

Lorna must have sold quite well in the beginning, because Atlas brought out *Jungle Tales* and *Jungle Action* in late 1954. Both comics carried four features of which *Jann of the Jungle* became the closest to rival Lorna. Jann was a brunette who wore a tight black costume and very sexy it was, too. She initially appeared in *Jungle Tales* which has a short run of only seven issues. Issue #8 became *Jann of the Jungle* and continued on a bi-monthly schedule until June 1957 (just before the Atlas Implosion).

Jungle Action folded after six issues and its claim to jungle girl fame was Leopard Girl. Dressed from head to toe in a skin tight leopard leotard, Leopard Girl was initially drawn by Al Hartley, then continued by Syd Shores from issue #3 on. Other characters in *Jungle Action* were Lo-zar, Lord of the Jungle (another Tarzan clone), and Jungle Boy. *Jungle Tales* had a Greg Knight twin called Cliff Mason, White Hunter, Waku, Prince of the Bantu, and the previously mentioned Jann. Art in both titles was provided by Syd Shores, Don Heck, Joe Maneely, Tuska and Romita. Shores did a couple of the *Jann of the Jungle* issues, but mostly the art came from Jay Scott Pike who alternated between Lorna and her dark haired rival. Pike's work with Jann in the first two issues of *Jungle Tales* is superb, and the equal of Werner Roth.

As I said earlier, I think Lorna was perhaps the best jungle lass of all. She looked the part, was terribly sexy, and was a pioneer of preserving wild life. Although it is only my opinion, I think there was no finer jungle girl artist than Werner Roth. Each panel was full of detail and good composition and when he was able, Roth created very imaginative scenes filled with dramatic light and shade techniques.

Lorna is not that common, certainly not as abundant as Fiction House or Fox jungle girls. It took me nine long years to complete my run, and I was searching all over the country to find them. Because *Lorna* is so underrated, pricing is relatively cheap: in fine condition all issues vary between $40 down to $25...that's according to the Guide.

Lorna, thank you for being, and thank you for making many of my days. ■

Nicky Wright is a published author, an avid comic book collector and historian, and a student of popular culture.

OUR HOBBY VS. CORPORATIONS AND GREED!

BY GREG PHARIS

In the last two years I have witnessed many changes and directions in the comic book industry. It has been one big roller coaster ride of late. So what's happening today?

Let's start at the time Ron Perelman purchased Marvel Comics (1990). I believe strongly that no corporation should own a hobby company. The comic book hobby is built upon our desire for fantasy. No level of the industry is excluded. We wouldn't be in this industry if we didn't need fantasy in our lives. This makes us unique especially as a business. What drives us is different than say, the auto industry. We interact differently, and we must be dealt with differently. The corporate mentality attempts to apply the same methods and principles to each company it owns, disregarding the uniqueness that each company may possess.

Those of us in the hobby and thus the industry view the world a little differently. Corporations must show gain each and every quarter regardless of what is going on in the world or right up their street. They have neither patience nor understanding. Things do not exist for them that only show a marginal return. A hobby exists foremost for entertainment and escapism (again fantasy). We've lost that priority to some extent because big money entered the picture. More and more I see my customers and friends having a difficult time balancing the intrinsic and the financial aspects.

I feel new comics cost too much and there are too many of them coming out each and every month. New comics and old comics are so intertwined. It used to be a customer would have enough money to purchase his new comics each week and still have some left over to delve into "what has come before" (back issues). Believe me, the situation with new books is affecting the back issue market. Both need to be healthy if the comic book industry is to exist. The customer feedback and personal observations I have

received leads me to the following suggestions in order for us to make any attempt at regaining the past glory this hobby deserves.

New Comics: People want to buy more new comics, but with hundreds of titles coming out each month (with prices ranging from $1.95 to the-sky's-the-limit) they are discouraged. They can't keep up so they either buy less or leave the hobby altogether. My message to publishers… let's all make a reasonable profit and get more people to stay in the hobby. (1) Cut your cover price on 95% of your titles to $1 or $1.25. Yes, they would have to be put on newsprint like the good old days. (2) Reduce your line. Each company does not have to produce 60+ titles every month. (3) Publish more self-contained stories and fewer crossovers and tie-ins. Concentrate on quality, continuity, and history, and we will see more readers and collectors. And speaking of readers and collectors, please remember that this is a hobby first—so actually read those comics, enjoy this wonderful hobby.

Old Comics: Isn't it strange that people want to buy more old comics too. But they don't want to mortgage their homes or sell their offspring to do so. My sales and requests of Golden Age comics are running about 10 to 1 in favor of lower grade books. Seems they want to fill those holes in their collections and actually possess the books while they're still alive! I suppose this sounds like I'm picking on those of you who are obsessed with (for one reason or another) pedigree books. Don't get me wrong, I like these books too. But most who come into my store keep telling me they can't afford them (are, again, discouraged). Amazingly, I can't keep up with the demand for pre 1964 comics in the FR to VG range. So pedigree book-pushers expand your inventory and offer more affordable lower grade books. Hey, that's what this wonderful *Overstreet Price Guide* is all about. Let's price our books according to *Guide*, otherwise, what purpose does a *Price Guide* serve if we are going to price everything at multiples of *Guide*?

I'm just optimistic enough to believe that our hobby can be different… motivated by values other than just making a big buck. I know we can have a good time… and make a reasonable profit too, because one of the unique aspects about us is that we care about this hobby (that's one of the reasons I like us). This makes us fairer in our dealings, and fairplay leads us to goodwill. And it follows that the more goodwill we spread, the more people will be attracted to our hobby, and the longer they'll stay!

Everybody wins. ■

Pre-Code Horror... the run-away hit!

Did I really pay that much? Did he really grade this a Fine? Why do I have this book in my collection? As we all recover from the after-con "hangover," many of us seem to be taking a second look at what really happened in the marketplace during the past three years. For one thing, grading standards have tightened up considerably, and not just a notch or two. Just a few months ago it was tempting to spring for that Cap #27 even though it was overpriced and overgraded; we thought the market would eventually, catch up to overpaying. Amazingly, some dealers have responded to the recent market corrections by actually under grading! A few have done it all along, but now more dealers are revising their grading standards, hoping to establish "new" reputations as strict graders. And it's working for some. Collectors are the beneficiaries as the overall market is stimulated. That's good news for collectors and dealers and for the hobby overall. Rumors are already buzzing around the hobby that the upcoming annual Overstreet Price Guide is going to reflect some big changes in values, grading, and market thinking! Waiting for the 1998 Guide is going to make the next few months mighty long!

Pre Golden Age/Golden Age (1933-45)

Years ago, certain Marvel Mystery issues sold better than others, then for awhile all issues were in high demand. Now we're back full circle, and once again personal taste reigns supreme. Demand continues unabated for Schomburg airbrush, classic cover Timelys, and certain Batmans and Detectives, with a great diversity in demand. Sales are proving steady for nice issues, while some issues are being discounted... especially the sometimes-perceived overpriced/mid-grade Timelys. On the short term horizon, investors seem to be competing for only a handful of books, while many long term investors are having a field day picking up those high grade copies that seemed to be non-existent two years ago. As for Mark Wilson's newly-discovered GA collection? Stay tuned for more incredible info.

Sales: Detective #32 FN $1,900; Dixie Dugan #1 GD $90; Fantastic #22 VF $510; Fighting Yank #4 VF $510; Flash #24 FN $590; Gay #23 VF $125; Green Mask #1 FR $110; Jumbo #1 FR $350; Key #1 VF/NM $285; Magic #1 VG/FN $1,000; Master #2 FN $780; Miss Fury #5 NM/M $785; Nickel #2 NM $1,100; Power #2 GD $190; SubMariner #2 GD $600; Wonder Comics ('44) FN $350; Wonder Woman #45 VF $525.

Post Golden Age/Pre Silver Age (1946-56)

This era of collectibles is truly out of control! Sales of 12 times Guide for unknown and unproven books is occurring all the time. It may sound high, but consider certain books that are 40-50 years old, and list for only $12 in NM? Demand for Baker covers still lead the way, with many Fox Romance titles now bringing many multiples of Guide (in mid grades as well as high grades). But by far the run-away hit of the past eight months has been pre-Code horror titles. Dr. Wertham apparently missed some incredible interiors, and collectors are having a great time "unearthing" these "ghastly" and incredible gems. Pre-Code Crime and Westerns are also under the collector's microscope, with some great stories and surprisingly good artwork coming to the forefront. Although really tough to find in high grade, the few gem quality specimens that are made available are snapped up even faster than their lesser condition brethren... and at amazing multiples! Keep your eye on this era of material, as it continues to set price records every day! This is one era where any "market correction" will be up, not down.

Sales: Fight #31 VG $120; Hickory #1 NM $240; Impact #1 VF $125; JoJo #12 VF+ $325; Journey *Continued on page 74*

GREG WHITE
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Greetings from sunny and hot Central Florida. As we settle into the autumn season we are prepared for what is traditionally a slow period. Hopefully this year will be different. Summer sales at the store were good, however convention sales and mail order were flat. We are particularly concerned with the convention situation. The shows have become retail flea markets. We bring only pre 1970 comic books to the cons that we set up at. Most of the so called 'dealers' bring new and recent products. This is fine if some semblance of retail sanity is maintained. However, when every other booth is blowing out recent garbage at a fraction of its cost it creates a less than ideal collectable atmosphere. At some shows one would think you are walking thru a Toys 'R Us store. The effect this has had on vintage back issue sales is clear. Many older collectors who use to frequent the shows (and purchase pre 1970 comics) are staying away. They are tired of row after row of new product and "blow-out artists." At some shows I am the only dealer with a decent selection of vintage books. That would be fine if the collectors for that product always would show—they do not. What does the future hold for comic book conventions? If all the general public comes for is freebies and those useless autographs we are in trouble.

We have made a few sales at recent conventions; Fantastic Four #9 NM $600; Batman #17 FR $150; and Archie #7 VG $50.

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SCHIFFMAN CONT.

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into Mystery #7 FN $370; Kaanga #2 NM $250 Contact #9 VF/NM $325; Katy Keene Annual #1 GD $70; Love Experiences #26 NM $110; My Life #13 NM $140; Popular Comics #145 VF/NM $90; Ringo Kid #1 FN $200 ; Startling #49 VF $1,200; Teen Age Temptations #5 FN $95; War Action #1 VF $165.

Silver Age (1956-69)

While the new "frenzied" onslaught of Silver collectors never saw the heights of 1992 this past summer, it did catch a few sellers by surprise. Many reported a steady flow of buyers this summer and fall, and a much increased demand for high grade books. Finding true high grade Silver Age books is becoming increasingly difficult, and collectors are stretching out in their search for Silver bargains. Some titles with renewed interest are Thor, Strange Tales, Superboy, and the Spectre. The strong demand for the DC "Big Five" war books continues, with nicer copies increasingly difficult to locate. We have yet to near the peak for DC war books, and even mid grade 10¢ers sell well at premiums.

Sales: Action #304 NM $58; Adventure #346 NM $32; Amazing Spider-Man #22 NM $280; Avengers #57 NM/M $125; Batman #105 VF/NM $530; Brave & Bold #54 FN $130; Captain America #100 FN $110; Dr. Strange #169 GD $35; 80 Pg Giant #7 VF $125 JLA #55 NM $70; Our Army At War #153 NM $130; Secret 6 #1 NM $65; Silver Surfer #2 NM $240; Spectre #1 NM $140.

Bronze Age (1970-79)

Who really ever thought we might see the day that 1970's books are being auctioned? How about for many multiples of guide? While the search continues for the next "scarce" book, others are attempting to put together full runs while they're still affordable. Take a quick survey of your local shops or dealers. Do they have these in-demand books.... in grade? Most collectors report that they don't. Some have even "bribed" shop owners with a few multiples of Guide to get them to search the "back room"... still little luck. 1970's collectors have hit the national "warehouse" dealers pretty hard... with the same proposition and still no luck. Many of these books (especially high grade early '70s giant issues) continue to be highly sought after. In fact, certain dealers and collectors felt that many who were selling at cons over the summer may have brought "the wrong inventory" when they left their Bronze Age at home.

Sales: Adventure #431 NM $45; All Star Western #10 GD $32; Amazing Spider-Man #124 NM $35; Chilli #1 VF/VF- $72; Conan #24 NM $30; Dead of Night #11 NM $11; Ghosts #1 FN $21; Hulk #181 GD $82; Lois Lane #105 NM $26; Marvel Spotlight #3 NM $25; Mister Miracle #1 NM $45; Phantom Stranger #33 NM $10; Pink Panther #1 VF/NM $42; Weird War #3 NM $35; Young Love #107 VF $78.

As collectors rush from one genre to another trying to get in on the ground floor of the next great boom, some dealers complain about holding way too much unwanted inventory. Yet this is really the essence of our dynamic market... one that is that is not stagnant and continues its often bumpy roller coaster ride regardless of the all the predictions, nay-saying, and second guessing. This is the comic book marketplace at its finest, because the average Joe has just as much chance to "buy in early" as the seasoned dealer! Some have suggested putting all of the information into one giant database, where everyone could access the latest pricing trends. Others are happy with the way things are because half of the excitement is the hunt and the discovery.

I even spoke with a collector last week, who informed me of his new discovery... a set of books called the Gerber Photo-Journal Guide. He said that with a Gerber, he can sit down at night, go through them, write down every neat cover that he would like to collect, and then call around. He also shared his latest inside tip... Suspense #3....

And finally, here are five underpriced books: Adventure Comics #431 - Guide $8, Market $26; Phantom Lady #23 - Guide $900, Market $1,800; Fight Comics #31 - Guide $150, Market $225; Harvey #1 - Guide $8, Market $38; and Crime Reporter #2 - Guide $465, Market $700. ■

MARKET REPORTS

Continued from page 72

Silver Age (1955-69)

The story remains the same here. High grade keys will find a home. Most other books struggle to sell at even 30% to 40% off Guide. I constantly advertise Marvel and DC Silver at prices well below Overstreet. In many cases I don't even receive an inquiry on the books. Now and then one will sel . I am able to move more books at the store thru our lay-away program I recently sold a full run of high grade Magnus Robot Fighter in this manner, however the group was priced at half Overstreet. I was still happy to make the sale. Books that will sell at closer to Guide prices are lower priced TV comics, funny animal and humor and many 1970's t tles. Marvel Silver in high grade continues to draw the "oohs" and "ahs" but few collectors in our area can afford them.

Recent Sales: Spider-Man #15 VG $75; Green Lantern #1 GD $125, and Fantastic Four #48 VF $275.

Golden Age (1933-54)

Not too much activity this past month. A dealer offered us his impressive stock of DC Golden Age at 40% off, however, we are already well stocked in that area and did not have immediate sales for most of his books, so we passed. Demand for esoteric and war time covers continues. A recent ad sold a couple of war bond DC books. The right Timely books will sell (Hitler, Schomburg) while many other Timely titles need a discount to move. Lou Fine and L.B. Cole covers remain in demand. Phantom Lady's will still sell at a reasonable price but are not the rage they were two years ago. As the Guide prices remain high, I see a greater supply of old comics than there are collectors to buy them, and I see no end to that problem in the near future.

Recent Sales: Sensation #47 FN $95; Gene Autry #1 VG $100; Donald Duck FC #159 FN $200; and Marvel Mystery #30 VG $300.

Original Art & Toys

I have seen recent movement on Disney animation drawings. I also receive requests for 1960's Marvel and DC art. We don't get much of that for resale. Most of our store stock of comic art is newer and sells only on occasion. I believe the market for vintage art is good if the price is reasonable. I have seen many over priced items sit this year. The collector base for

art is smaller to that of comic books—you have to be lucky enough to catch the right guy. We recently saw a wonderful selection of 1940's and 1950's Batman art. Too bad the prices were so high that very little sold. It wasn't a lack of interest—the guy's booth was mobbed—but few could afford the prices.

Toys follow the same path—nice items that are priced right will move. Put a foolish price on most toys and they become museum pieces. Demand continues for boxed Capt. Action and Aurora kits.

Recent Sales: Robin Aurora kit boxed $95; Corgi Black Beauty loose $75; Sleeping Beauty animation drawing $95; Flintstone cel, 1980s, $50.

That will wrap our month. Have a great autumn. When visiting the Walt Disney World area please stop by and say hello!

TONY STARKS
COMICS INA FLASH
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It has been one heck of a year! One thing is for certain, we certainly need the upcoming Overstreet Comic Book Price Update (CBM #54), because prices are up and down all over the place. For those of you that don't know me, I specialize in comic books published in the 1970s (sometimes called Bronze Age and it stuck!), so I think I'll start there. Besides, it represents most of the good news in my report.

Bronze Age

Interest has truly heated up here. Every week brings some new, exciting discovery and perhaps a new record price. So many areas and books are sought after, it's hard to summarize it. Interest is intense in the "bigger and better" oversize books. This includes DC's 100 page and 52 page comic books, Marvel and DC Treasuries, and to a lesser degree Marvel's Giant Size line up. I get a minimum of $5 on any 52 page, $8 on any 100 page book in NM, regardless of title. Shazam to Superman Family, the 100 pagers are HOT! Examples of typical sales are: Witching Hour #38 FN+ (100 pages) $8; Heart Throbs #140 NM- (52 pages) $12; House of Secrets #97, 98 VF (52 pages) $6; and Marvel Treasury Edition #1 VF+ $30.

Horror/Monster/Mystery is very much in demand. On the DC side, it's titles like House of Secrets/House of Mystery/Unexpected. For Marvel, it's all their reprint titles like Beware, Creatures on the Loose, Chamber of Chills and the like. Marvel's mainstream horror titles like Tomb of Dracula, Frankenstein and Werewolf by Night are also in demand. Examples of typical sales in this area are: Werewolf by Night #1 NM $50; Tomb of Dracula #1 NM/MT $100; Chamber of Chills #1 NM $8; and Frankenstein #1 NM $30.

Perhaps the most intense interest, and the hardest to satisfy, is the 1970's collector's desire for any and all books that are obscure and hard to find. Who would have guessed that 5 years ago that Night Nurse #1 would bring $50, Weird War Tales #1 $85, Larry Harmon's Laurel & Hardy (DC one-shot) $50, Ghosts #1 $60 or Supernatural Thrillers #5 (Living Mummy) would bring $20. But they do, and I have collectors calling in mass, asking me if I have more than one copy!

Of course I don't, because the fact that they are scarce is the whole point! Many of the obscure DC books are also oversized (no surprise, they cost more so sold poorly), and are doubly collectible. Would you believe $80 for a NM copy of Young Love #107 (100 pages) or $100 for Weird War Tales #1 NM? The books are in an auction (with two weeks to go) and these prices are only the current high bids, and I think they are sure to go higher!

On the superhero front, things are a lot more varied. Run issues of most mainstream titles (Spidey, FF Avengers, Batman, Superman, Flash, etc.) are slow to moderate in demand, often taking discounts to sell. But first issues in NM on most titles bring a premium.

A few final general sales that may illustrate various trends. Marvel Team-Up #1 NM/MN $125; Giant Size X-Men #1 NM $500; Shazam #1 NM $8; Marvel Double Feature #1 NM $7.50; Tarzan #207 NM $12; Amazing Spider-Man #124 (1st Man Wolf) $35, #134 NM (1st Tarantula) $35; Amazing Adventures #11 VF (New Beast) $40; Avengers #71 NM (1st Invaders) $30, #83 NM (1st Red Wolf) $15; Black Magic #1 $7.50; Blitzkrieg #1 $40, Brothers of the Spear #1 NM $20; Capt. America #143 NM- (giant size) $10; Chilling Adventures in Sorcery (Sabrina) #1 NM $20, #2 FN $8; Combat Kelly #1 NM $12; Daredevil #77 NM $12; Emergency (Charlton Magazine) #1 NM $10, #3 VF $4; Haunted #1 NM $12; Marvel Spotlight #2 VF+ (1st Werewolf by Night) $65, #12 NM (Son of Satan) $12; Outlaw Kid #1 NM $10, Richard Dragon, Kung Fu Fighter #1 NM-$3; Star Spangled War #151 NM (1st Unknown Soldier) $100; Superman's Pal Jimmy Olsen #133 NM (Kirby begins) $30, #134 VF (Darkside) $35.

Silver Age

Here, the overwhelming trend is the discounting taking place to sell lower grade (FN or less) books. Most 12¢ cover price Marvels require a 40-50% discount to sell. Spidey and FF fair a little better and will usually sell at about one third off. DCs are also holding up better; the discounts needed are around one third off, less than that for Batman and Superman titles. For both companies, the need to discount is much less, 20% or less, on 10¢ cover price books. The major keys like Amazing Spider-Man #1 and Fantastic Four #1 will not sell at Guide Price in GD to FN or even VF condition here. Collectors just will not (or cannot) pay two grand for a VG Spidey #1. I think half that is closer to the mark.

Of course, the situation is entirely different for books in NM condition. There, the price is holding steady and most books get near Guide Prices. Some key issues will still bring over Guide Prices. I'm not going to bother listing all the issues of Atom, Aquaman, Justice League, Tales of Suspense, Tales to Astonish and Strange Tales in GD to FN condition that were sold for 1/3 to 1/2 Guide. There were a lot of them. I'd rather list the few notable sales recorded on some really hard to find books.

Silver Age sales: Fighting American #1 FN $7; Space Adventures #33 NM (1st Capt. Atom) $400; and Young Men #24 VF (Re-intro Capt. America, Human Torch and Submariner) $1,200

Golden Age

I don't really sell enough Golden Age books to offer any great insights. A few sales include America's Best #11 FN $125; Captain Marvel Jr. #119 VG+ (final issue, electrocution cover) $60; and Captain Midnight #43 FN $75.

Well, that's about it. Just remember—if you read what you collect and collect what you read, you always come out ahead in this hobby.

Collectors should note that the opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Seasoned hobbyists are acutely aware that prices vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors. ■

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Continued from page 9

45,000 to 50,000 copies sold per issue—making Freelance one of the best selling books in the Canadian comic book marketplace. When the American Embargo was lifted and Canadian publishers were given the option of publishing American books, Bell Comics quickly dropped all its original Canadian heroes including the great Johnny Canuck and replaced them with American colour reprints. No so with Freelance, Anglo-American (the company that owned Freelance) tried to push Freelance as a colour comic book in Canada and in the U.S.A. Eventually, after a year or so the book failed and Anglo closed down but not before giving the good fight. Nobody could expect any less from Freelance, The Great Canadian Comic Book Hero.

I've enclosed a couple of Captain George's Penny Dreadfuls, you'll find an article by Pete Harris which explores The Johnny Canuck Myth—you should find it most interesting.

Also, could you please bring back the Cover Gallery. The Captain Comet covers would have looked great in that format. Take care, and on to issue #100.

Fred Diana, Ontario, Canada

Back issues?

Due to no small effort, I am now a mere 3 copies away from having a complete collection of Comic Book Marketplace. I have noticed that you have been very accommodating with readers as to where they can find back issues of your magazine. What I have wondered, is why you do not keep previous issues in print?

The fact is, your magazine is not just the most informative source for comic collecting, the sheer magnitude of historic information contained within make it an indispensable reference source. The most important collecting tools I have are the Gerber Photo Guides, the Overstreet Guide, and Comic Book Marketplace.

I have spent the better part of a year averaging 1 to 2 shows a week, and the lack of back issues of your magazine amazes me. When I can find issues, the dealers themselves are sorry to part with the copies. Thanks to Bud Plant, many of the later issues are available, but still many issues are near impossible to find.

What I would like to suggest is a format that many other collector magazines have used, and with great success. Video Watchdog, a laser and video oddity monthly, 2nd prints any issues that are out of print, they also publish an omnibus edition of one year's issues at once. The Jack Kirby Collector as well as Asian Cult Cinema also collects out of print issues. If you look at your rate of sales, perhaps you would be surprised by the number of copies you could sell of a 2nd printed issue. Again, I am only suggesting this because your magazine has attained encyclopedic status among serious collectors, and anything to draw more collectors in to the hobby: the better.

David K. Smith, Connecticut

Olden Comic Books

Wanted to write a quick note to compliment you on a fine magazine. The issues that featured Julius Schwartz, the man responsible for the Silver Age of Comics, were extraordinary. His accomplishments during this period were exceptional and all who enjoy the medium, both creators and collectors, owe many thanks to him for his foresight and vision.

His recollections and insights rekindled my memories of youth, of riding a bus to the Million Year Picnic in Harvard Square and spending my allowance on comic books, both new and old. Although I was born too late to experience the Silver Age in real time, I have cherished this period as a collector since I was about 10 years old, when a new comic cost 30¢ and for $2 or $3 dollars, you would get a very decent 10¢ or 12¢ Silver Age comic. (I remember buying a NM Green Lantern #9 right out of a bin for $5.95 and the fine copies of JLA #21 & 22 that were purchased for $3 apiece or the time my brother and I begged our mother to loan us the money to buy a Green Lantern #1 for the (then) ungodly sum of $35.)

There was a serise of wonder in reading these early adventures of my favorite heroes, but it was not until later in life did I realize the historical importance of many of these stories.

I collected comics through high school but had to quit in order to pay for college. Two years after I graduated and during a visit to my

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fiancée (since having becoming my wife) Elaina, I chanced upon the old Geppi's Comic World in Woodlawn, Md. After my near seven year absence, I could not believe how much the hobby had expanded or how expensive many of these issues I bought during my childhood had become.

As I slowly drifted back into the hobby, I also became more educated on the historical importance of many of these stories and the Silver Age of comics in general, knowledge that was recanted and expanded upon in many of Julius Schwartz' recollections. This age of comics was truly a most enjoyable time for a good many of the collectors in this hobby and you have done a great job in documenting the rich history in these issues of CBM.

As I sit and write this note to you now, I have several college degrees behind me and Elaina and I are the proud parents of three beautiful children. My oldest child Steven, has a love of comic books and has burgeoning collection of his own. One of our favorite times as father and son is to take a trip to a comic book store or convention together, but my absolute favorite times are when he asks "Daddy, can we read one of your olden comic books tonight?"

Take care and thanks for the enjoyment.

PS–I just checked out the website and learned you were going to include a Silver, Bronze, and Modern Age Price Update supplement in issue #54. I think this is a great idea because a credible price guide only comes out once a year at present. I really enjoyed the Comic Book Monthlys that Overstreet used to publish about 4 or 5 years ago. Apart from the accurate pricing, the letters from the collectors and dealers and the marketplace mail were great features. I learned more about the hobby from those letters than just about anywhere else. Believe it or not, I sometimes go back and read those magazines because there was so much great stuff contained in the those features. It was a great forum for exchanging information and asking questions relative to our beloved hobby. Well, I wanted to take two minutes to voice my support for this worthwhile endeavor. Best of luck.

Tony Kourepenis, via email

50th Anniversary CBM

Recently picked up your 50th Anniversary issue, and I must say you couldn't have picked a better topic to cover—Strange Adventures (Captain Comet).

I love the Strange Adventures cover you used for the 50th issue. I hope I see more coverage of Strange Adventures, Mystery In Space, and Star Spangled War Stories in the future.

Also, I hope Comic Book Marketplace covers the Legion of Superheroes and the pre-superhero Marvel comics—Tales of Suspense, Tales to Astonish and Strange Tales with all those wonderful monsters and outer space creatures like "Elektro" and "Klagg." Your magazine is the best by far. Keep up the good work.

John Perullo, Massachusetts

A Legion issue and a pre-hero Marvel issue are in the planning stages right now!

Remarkable Editor

I wanted to drop you a letter to congratulate you for the special issues that you have devoted to Julie Schwartz. For you personally I'm sure that no labor could prove any more rewarding than furthering your research and understanding of this remarkable editor/pioneer/fan-at-heart and all around renaissance man of the comic book world! What would we have done without him?

I was struck very much by the specific knowledge that you gave us in CBM #51 when comic book issue numbers were reviewed. In other words, they used issue #105 for Flash because they assumed that readers would place more faith in a continuing series, and they dropped the #1s from the covers of other important early issues—to avoid signaling to the buying public that a new title was just starting out. My, oh my, oh my—how times have changed! I guess that this is just what nostalgia is all about.

I am about to leave for the LoneStarCon2, or the 55th World Science Fiction Convention tomorrow. The first WorldCon that I attended was Cleveland in 1966. This convention goes back to 1939, and who was back there at the beginning of science fiction? Julie, who else, among many others! I will carry my copy of Sam Moskowitz's The Immortal Storm (the history of early science fiction fandom from the 1930s to post WWII) with me and try and get other "early" first fandom SF authors like Jack Williamson to sign the interior pages. The fact that this older fandom with its rich history and culture bleeds into comics fandom in the 1940s and 1950s becomes that much more apparent to younger readers as they continue to read articles in Comic Book Marketplace. To me, this is the real value of the work that you do month after month when you edit and create each issue.

Some people might look at CBM and label it the ultimate "niche" *(Continued on page 79)*

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A CBM milestone issue...

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The Overstreet's Price Update!

Continued from page 77

publication. But in the hipster language of the late '50s, I'd have to say that "It's one bitch of a niche, MAN!" With my best regards,

Jerry Weist, New York

Besides being Sotheby's comic book consultant and one of the foremost experts on EC comics, Jerry gets little credit for publishing one of the first Fanzines back in the mid 1960s. (At the ripe old age of 15!). It's always nice to hear from you Jerry... and congrats to you and Dana on the upcoming new addition to the Weist clan!

Shelly Moldoff writes...

Thank you for having Shirl and myself to your AACC Saturday night dinner—it is a highlight of the San Diego Con.

Enclosed, is the information we discussed to set the record straight. The enclosed drawings scattered throughout the CBM Batman article (issue #49) were mine—and the American Airlines brochure was from one that I did for Kane.

It constantly amazes me... I started to work for Bob Kane in 1940...and later a 15-year stint from '53-'67...doing all his pencils, including the Newark Star Ledger newspaper, plus Courageous Cat and Minute Mouse TV series. I have not heard him acknowledge that he even knows me...? Anyway, thanks again Gary. P.S. Incidentally, Bob's apartment didn't look like that. Regards,

Sheldon Moldoff, Florida

Punisher meets Archie

Here is something I hope you fitted into Scott Shaw!'s Oddball Archie series. In 1994, Marvel's answer to the Executioner set foot in Riverdale; the Punisher met Archie!

Yes, in one of five Punisher intercompany appearances, Frank Castle was taken to Riverdale in search of a drug czar who bore an uncanny resemblance to Archie Andrews! Castle briefly mistakes Andrews for his quarry, but realizes his mistake in the nick of time (Batton Lash, who wrote the tie-up imagined that Archie would have probably had heard of the Punisher on the radio or on the TV news, but he would not have paid much attention to it. After all, Lash reasoned, one may hear of the Zodiac Killer, but one doesn't expect to meet him). The Punisher and Archie teamed up to save Veronica from the crime kingpin! The Punisher Meets Archie made it hilariously clear that the Punisher's glory days were over by 1994. (All Punisher titles have been canceled as of this writing.) Wolverine briefly appeared at the end of The Punisher Meets Archie as a teaser for future Marvel/Archie co-productions.

Let us move on to another interesting point: have you ever noticed that while heroes who kill are considered dark anti-heroes in comic book fandom, equally ruthless movie (and other media) heroes like Dick Tracy, James Bond, and Indiana Jones are considered nice, upbeat children's heroes by the general public! While one might try to excuse Bond and Jones for their lethal tactics because they are happy-go-lucky, one must remember that ...so is Lobo!

John McDonagh, Massachusetts

Pure Crap!

As always your September 1997 (CBM #51) issue was outstanding. Great articles, excellent cover reproductions and beautiful coloring throughout.

I particularly enjoyed the interview with Al Williamson. I am in complete agreement with his response to Steve Ringgenberg's inquiry on his thoughts about the idea of updating characters—don't mess with the characters developed by their creators. Sure let them age or wear their hair longer or get married, but keep to the basic concept developed. I just hate DC's recent characterization of Superman and some years back, Captain America's venture as Nomad. Pure crap. And when the Shadow became a machine or robot I wanted to vomit. Awful. On the other hand, Frank Miller's rendition of Batman in the Dark Knight Returns is an excellent example of updating a character without changing the basic concept.

I am sure the current crop of writers can come up with interesting storylines without messing with the original characters. If you require further proof; pick up any current issue of Sandman Mystery Theatre. Thanks for everything.

John G. Schreiber, New Hampshire

I do mean years

Just a couple of comments on CBM #51. First, I also have a Wild Bill Hickock and Jingles #75 (I found #74 & 75 over 20 years ago), I've never seen a #76. Second, in Michelle Nolan's column, she talks about how hard it is to find All-Star Western #117-119. I bought coverless copies of them in 1962. I looked forever for #120. I was really disappointed when I found out it was canceled. As for finding ones with covers...it took me years and I do mean years to find them.

So there are a lot of westerns out there from the end of the '50s and the beginning of the '60s that are really hard to find. (I've collected westerns from that period since they were new.) Thanks for a truly wonderful magazine. Keep up the GREAT WORK.

Rod Matlack, Colorado

Stalwart Scribe

Golden Girls by Ray Connell (CBM #52) was an enjoyable piece about some of comic's earliest superheroines. For a more detailed look at the subject of heroines, check out Trina Robbins' very entertaining book, The Great Women Super Heroes (1996). On the book's acknowledgments page, Ms. Robbins thanks "Michelle Nolan, the girl with the most comics in the world," for the use of her Golden Age collection. Michelle, of course, is the stalwart scribe behind Nolan's Notebook. The columns of Michelle Nolan and Pat S. Calhoun provide CBM readers with fun and fascinating facts on a monthly schedule. I also hope to see more of Will Murray's, The Pulp Connection in the future.

I love reading about the American Comic Group, so Rolf Gerdau's column of Midnight Mystery was much appreciated. Recently, I reread Mr. Gerdau's "I Witnessed the Wrath of the Code" from CBM #19 (Nov. 1992), an intriguing look at how ACG altered many of its tales to conform to the Comics Code Authority.

I anxiously await the Halloween horror issue of CBM. Keep up the superlative work.

Timothy M. Walters, Oklahoma

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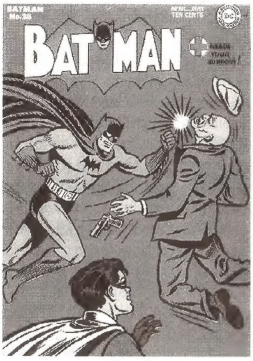

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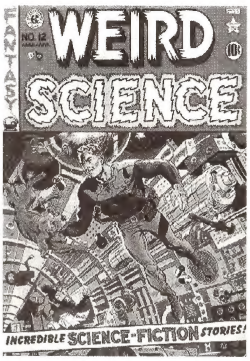

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Special Holiday Overstreet Comic Book Price Update featuring Silver Age, Bronze Age and Modern Age prices! The only place to find it is CBM #54! On sale in November!

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